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SHORT STORIES.

No. 662.]

For the Week Ending September 7th, 1901.

[ONE PENNY.]

The Adventures of an Actress.



One glance at the deathly-white face told him that it was indeed the girl he loved better than all else in the world.

STARTLING REVELATIONS OF THE STAGE.

THE ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS.

V.—Back from the Grave.

By DONOVAN MART.

CHAPTER I.

It was Sunday afternoon. The special train containing the members of *The Good Samaritan* company on tour, drew up in Newcastle station.

Politeness is usually at a discount on such occasions. It is too often the rule for the male members of a company, unless they happen to number wives or sweet-hearts amongst the ladies of the "show," to lose no time in hurrying off to secure good lodgings for themselves, leaving their female colleagues to shift as best they can for themselves.

On this hot September afternoon, however, the unusual sight could have been seen of the gentlemen of the company all crowding round one of their ladies, all eager to proffer help and assistance, the reason for which was apparent from one glance at the lady in question.

For she was beyond doubt one of the most beautiful women it would be possible to imagine. A woman, too, who looked all the more lovely by reason of her contrast with those standing around her, upon whose faces was plainly stamped the seal of "the profession."

"Isn't it sickening?" said one of the ladies, who rejoiced in the fine-sounding name of Miss Templeton Fane, "how the boys all fawn round Miss Harlow? She's a jolly sight too haughty to please me."

"Yes," answered the other, known to fame (!) as Miss Julia Montague, "and the worst of it is, Jenny Lovelace has chummed in with her. I should like to pay her a trick somehow."

"So should I," answered the other. "But come on, we must go and hunt for digs."

In the meanwhile, Hazel Harlow, the unconscious object of this venom, and her friend Jenny, had got rid of the, to Hazel, unwelcome attentions of Messrs. Clive Pendenis, Hayward Lindsay, Ralph Garden and Percy Carruthers, to say nothing of the manager, Raymond Venables, whose infatuation for Hazel was quite a topic of conversation in the company.

This was another reason why such ladies as Mesdames Fane and Montague were sore with Hazel. Had the handsome manager only deigned to pay his addresses to them, they would not, like Hazel, have been so backward in accepting them. Miss Harlow was so "straight." She even objected to supper-parties with "Johnnies!" She openly avowed her intention of keeping all men at

arm's length until she had found the one man whom she would honour with her heart and hand! Was ever such a thing heard of on the stage?

Jenny Lovelace, who was an old stager "on the road," took Hazel under her wing.

"Tra-la-la, boys," she said merrily. "I'll take Miss Harlow with me."

There was one man in *The Good Samaritan* company, who played a minor part in the piece, who was somewhat different to the usual run of travelling actors.

This was Percy Carruthers, a man of good education and family, who had drifted into theatrical life, lured thither by the same bait that has proved so effective over and over again—the belief that it is in everyone's power to become an Irving or a Wyndham.

Now Carruthers, though originally good-hearted and clever enough, had contracted a habit that is, perhaps, more prevalent on the stage than anywhere else—the habit of secret drinking. Disappointment, coupled with the unending monotony of his existence—for nothing is more monotonous than the life of a strolling player—had introduced him to alcohol as a soother. And now the habit had become a fixed one.

To add to his trials, the actor had fallen madly in love with Hazel Harlow, the beautiful "lead" of the company. And alcohol and his passion, hopeless he knew, were combining to drive Percy Carruthers to the dreadful sea of insanity from which there is rarely a return.

Yet his fellow actors suspected nothing. "He's quicer, Carruthers is," they would say carelessly, "but a decent chap, always ready to stand a drink or lend a fellow five bob. Oh, yes, he's all right, is old Percy."

To Hazel Harlow herself the actor was always studiously polite. He never, as the others did, paid her fulsome compliments, or made love to her. Yet sometimes she would notice, during rehearsals, or upon the stage while the piece was in progress, that his eyes were fixed upon her face with a burning intensity that was almost uncanny. His whole soul seemed to be in his eyes.

Hazel Harlow had renounced the *nom de plume* she had adopted, Hilda Hatherleigh, and was now upon the playbills under her own name.

"I won't sail under false colours," she said. "I've done nothing to be ashamed of. It was my father's

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unkindness that drove me from home. So let me be known as Hazel Harlow."

But to return to Carruthers. An old hand, such as he was "on the road," was never at a loss for rooms in the towns visited by the company. He accordingly departed at once to discover whether the apartments he usually occupied were vacant.

To his satisfaction they were. He lost no time in settling his few "traps" in their place for the ensuing week, and then, sitting down quietly in his apartment, he produced a brandy bottle, and, with the aid of a pipe, gave himself up to a lengthy "think."

His eyes were supernaturally bright. There was a far-away look in them. Suddenly he drew a photograph from his breast-pocket and began to study it attentively. It was a portrait of Hazel Harlow in her character of Ruth in *The Good Samaritan*, and fine presentment of the actress though it was, it failed to do justice to the radiant beauty of the original.

"How lovely you are, my little Hazel," murmured Carruthers, fervently pressing the portrait to his lips, "and I'll win you yet. If only I could possess you for my own! Can I think of no plan whereby I can call you mine?" He rose to his feet and began pacing up and down the narrow room like a tiger in a cage, his eyes shining with the light of a sudden access of delirium.

His lips moved quickly as he walked to and fro. "It can be done," he muttered, "we have a week here. Thank heaven, I know the theatre as well as I know my own hand. Hazel's dressing-room is cut off from the rest. The window opens out on to a broad roof. Danger! Of course there's danger! Yet a man can only die once. And if only I can call Hazel mine for a few short hours what matters it? Life has no more to give me. It can be done. There is much to be thought out. Yet I'll do it—I'll do it!"

He took another draught of the fiery potion, whose slave he was, and that had already set his fevered brain still more awl. If only his brother actors could have seen Percy Carruthers at that moment—Carruthers the quiet, the irreproachable! Perhaps they might then have realised the true state of affairs—might have averted the perpetration of a madman's scheme.

The diabolical cunning of the mentally diseased is proverbial. The scheme that Percy Carruthers had set afoot in his brain would have been impossible to a sane being. Even had it been conceived, it would have been dismissed with a shudder as too terrible for attempt even by the most hardened of criminals.

Yet Carruthers was no criminal. He was worse—a madman of the most terrible kind, so mad that he could hide his insanity beneath a cloak of reason, so mad that no scheme could seem too outrageous to serve the achievement of his own desires.

Till late into the night he sat solitarily planning and plotting, working out the details of the fiendish scheme he had conceived so suddenly, and that now seemed to possess every fibre of his brain.

CHAPTER II.

THE first few days in Newcastle went uneventfully enough for *The Good Samaritan* company. Hazel Harlow, already the victim of such thrilling experiences in her first venture as an actress, was now beginning to hope that her troubles were over. Horace Caldecott, the villain who had already made two dastardly attempts to abduct her from her career, had assuredly shot his last

bolt the week before at Sheffield. Valerie Bellairs, the woman who had done her best to wreck Hazel's young life, had also apparently passed out of her life. Among her fellow actors and actresses Hazel felt that assuredly she was safe. And then there was Eric Monteith, her noble-minded young lover, who was willing to give up his life to guard her from wrong.

Eric had written to her from London to say that he hoped to be able to come to Newcastle to witness her triumph in that city before the expiration of the company's week there. He begged her to be on her guard against treachery, as he was convinced that Horace Caldecott would yet leave no stone unturned to trap her.

But little did Eric dream of the new danger that menaced Hazel. And it was the girl's own rare beauty and purity that constituted so terrible a menace to her safety in the profession she had chosen to adopt.

Newcastle went mad, as Sheffield had done, over the beautiful young actress, whose personality and charms were so far superior to the usual run of ladies of the stage.

And Raymond Venables, actor manager, rubbed his hands, metaphorically, as the boards "House full" went up outside the Theatre Royal every night.

"Well, if I can't marry Hazel Harlow," he said to himself, "I can at least make money out of her"—which somewhat sordid remark covered a genuine passion that the manager took scanty pains to conceal.

All the young "bloods" of Newcastle tried in vain to break down the barriers of Hazel's maiden modesty. They besieged her with invitations to supper-parties, ave, even with offers of marriage. A well-known sprig of the nobility would have made her a duchess and run the gauntlet of the abuse that would have fallen upon his somewhat shallow young head, only—Hazel declined the honour.

Naturally, such homage paid to an *ingénue* fluttered the feminine doves of the company, with the exception of Jenny Lovelace, who worshipped the very ground Hazel trod on, and who had, as we have seen already, proved her loyal-heartedness by saving her friend from a terrible danger in Sheffield.

"I do hope we shall get away from Newcastle without any mishap," said Hazel, almost jestingly, to her friend, as together they set out one morning to see the old castle, the Tyne bridge, the shipping on the river, and all the sights of busy old Newcastle.

"So do I," echoed Jenny fervently, glancing almost apprehensively at her friend's lovely face. "Do you know," she went on, "I'm glad I'm not beautiful. I don't say so because of sour grapes, but because if I were a man and in love with you, Hazel, I don't think I'd let anything come in the way of my winning you."

Hazel smiled rather sadly.

"I'm glad you're not a man, Jenny," she said. "If you were, I couldn't walk with you so peaceably and securely. What a nuisance it is that men can't be friendly with you without making love. At least, Mr. Monteith is friendly and gallant, and courteous, but—a rosy flush overspread her face.

"He's in love with you, too," cried her companion. "There's an ideal husband for you, Hazel."

"Yes, but I don't want a husband yet. I want to be a great actress, to live in peace. Perhaps some day I'll fall in love."

This was a typical conversation, carried on by the two girls, showing how perfect was the accord that existed

between them. The very dissimilarity in their several characters and appearance was only a greater bond between them.

And so four days passed away, and nothing happened to mar the uneventfulness of the visit to Newcastle. And every day saw fuller self-confidence for Hazel Harlow. Every day she began to feel more certain that she had in her the elements that go to make a great actress, a strong vein of romance, extreme beauty, health, youth, impersonality and a steadfast resolve to keep herself pure and unspotted from the world. If with these attributes she could not win her way upon the stage, then surely the theatrical profession was one that no woman should embark upon, for there could not be such a thing as justice.

And visions of herself in London, the Mecca of all true artists, acclaimed by press and public as the greatest actress since Bracegirdle or Siddons, would obtrude themselves upon Hazel's brain. The love of her art had taken possession of the young girl. She had no room in her heart for human passion.

Thus some men called her cold, adamant, passionless, women vain and self-opinionated. Yet Hazel's heart beat warm and true within her. There was, assuredly, never a more womanly woman than this country farmer's daughter, never one more ready to listen to the appeals of the needy or distressed. She only lacked one thing, the touch of that magician's wand called Love. And as yet love had passed her by unheeding.

It was four o'clock on Thursday afternoon. Hazel was alone in the little sitting-room of her apartments reading. Suddenly there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," cried Hazel.

A maid-servant entered with a note. Hazel looked carefully at the address on the envelope. The handwriting was familiar to her, though she could not for a moment recall the writer. It was evidently an educated hand. The note was as follows:

"Dear Miss Harlow,

"I am venturing to write and ask you a very great favour. I am in trouble and want your help. You are the only woman I know who is the embodiment of all that is good and tender, as a woman should be. Will you, therefore, meet me in the theatre at five o'clock this afternoon. And might I suggest that your dressing-room would be the best place for a private interview. It is secluded, and what I have to say to you I should not care for others to hear. If you could comply with my request you would be conferring an inestimable boon upon an unhappy man. Do not trouble to answer this. I shall go to the theatre and wait for you.

"Yours very sincerely,

"PERCY, CARRUTHERS."

Now, as anyone will admit, there was nothing at all in this note to arouse any suspicions of danger in Hazel's breast. The missive was perfectly straightforward. Carruthers said he was in trouble, and wanted a confidante who would offer him advice. The matter, whatever it was, evidently touched him very deeply, so much that he desired above all things privacy in unburdening himself. So reasoned Hazel, and so would nine women out of ten reason, whose susceptibilities are inclined to all that is good and tender in life.

"Poor Mr. Carruthers," mused Hazel, letting the note fall idly from her hand. "So that accounts for his having been so quiet these last few days. He has something on his mind. I wonder what it can be. Ah, well, I suppose

I must accede to his request. If it had been Mr. Pen-dennis or Mr. Hayward Lindsay I should never have consented to a *tele-à-tele*, because I know that they would have tried to make love to me. But Mr. Carruthers has always been polite and courteous. He's a gentleman, one can see that, although I've sometimes thought he takes rather too much to drink. Though that's a fault that a good many actors and actresses seem to have. How sad it is! Why can't we be on the stage and yet live in one's private life as other people do? Ah, well, it's no good my moralising. The question is, shall I go and see Mr. Carruthers? I'll go and ask Jenny. But no, I'd better not do that. Mr. Carruthers wouldn't like to think that I had betrayed his confidence. I'll just go and see what he wants without telling a soul. If only I can be of any assistance to him I shall be very happy."

Hazel looked at her watch. It was just four o'clock. She determined to have a cup of tea and then walk to the theatre, which was barely ten minutes away.

In the meantime Carruthers was already making his way to the theatre. At the stage-door was the door-keeper, alone and looking particularly sleepy. He brightened up as Carruthers approached.

"Hullo, Bill," said the actor. "You look thirsty."

"I am that," answered Bill.

Carruthers drew a flask from his pocket. "Have a drink?" he said carelessly.

Bill's eyes glistened. He took the flask and had a long pull.

"Thank you, sir," he said, handing the silver "refresher" back to its owner.

Carruthers nodded. "Right O!" he said. "I'm just going up to my dressing-room for something," he continued.

Bill relapsed into his seat in the little box just inside the stage-door portals. The drink had made him sleepy. He felt an absolutely irresistible longing for sleep come over him. Curious, he had never felt like that before. Why—the next moment his head fell forward on his chest and he was sleeping like the dead.

Carruthers looked curiously at the recumbent door-keeper. A smile played about his thin lips. An ominous glitter came into his dark eyes.

"When you awake, friend Bill," he muttered, "Hazel Harlow will be mine, and you—well, you will be wondering what has happened to you. Did you enjoy your drink? You didn't taste the sleeping draught, did you? Ah, well, good-bye, my friend, sleep on," and with a curious little laugh the madman, for such he undoubtedly was, passed inside the deserted theatre.

A flight of stairs led up to the dressing-rooms at the back of the stage. The staircase was gloomy. Carruthers hurried to his own dressing-room.

In a moment he issued forth from the room bearing something in his arms, that appeared rather weighty. Five times he made the journey to his dressing-room and out again, on each occasion bearing a mysterious parcel. These packages he deposited carefully in two doorways, one on either side of the staircase. Hazel's dressing-room lay at the top of the stairs, to reach which would necessitate her passing the doorways in question.

This done Carruthers looked at his watch. It was a quarter to five. He hurried back to his dressing-room. She must get to her room first, he muttered.

At five o'clock to the minute Hazel presented herself at the stage-door of the theatre. Bill was still sleeping

soundly. The girl looked at him curiously. "It's a shame to wake him," she said to herself with a smile, "he's tired from doing nothing."

She entered the quiet theatre, and hurried up the stairs that led to her dressing-room. To her surprise Carruthers was not there, as he had said he would be. Ah, well, he would assuredly be there before long.

Hardly had the thought crossed her mind before there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," cried Hazel, and Carruthers at once entered.

He was very pale, and his eyes shone with intense brightness. So much Hazel noted at once.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Carruthers," she said sweetly, "you see I've come. I'm so sorry to hear you're in trouble." If I can help you, believe me I shall be only too pleased.

The actor fixed his burning eyes upon the beautiful face before him. For a moment or so he seemed to be struggling to find his voice.

"Miss Harlow," he blurted out at last, his voice sounding harsh and strained. "I have sent for you, because—because I love you with a passion that is consuming my very being. I cannot sleep, I cannot eat, for love of you.

To look upon you is joy unspeakable, to hear your voice is heaven, to be with you is a torturing madness that I can hardly bear."

A cold wave of horror seemed to pass over Hazel's frame. She shuddered visibly, and shrank back before the madman's frenzied outburst.

"Ah, you shudder," cried Carruthers, his eyes more wildly glaring than ever. "You shrink from me! No matter, you are mine, mine! you cannot escape me!"

He made a step forward. A wild scream broke from Hazel's lips. "Let me go!" she cried. "How could you bring me here by such a base trick!" A faint smell of burning assailed her nostrils.

A low laugh answered her, a laugh in which there was no vestige of sanity, that suddenly conveyed to her the terrible truth. The next instant Carruthers threw open the door. A cloud of pungent smoke, mingled with the crackling of burning wood drove inward. The theatre was on fire! The maniac laughed again.

"See, my Hazel, my queen," he cried. "You cannot escape me. A sea of fire stretches between you and the street. And I did it, I, Percy Carruthers, did it so that you should be mine, mine, MINE!"

His voice rose to a scream. Hazel's blood ran cold



"Tra-la-la, boys," she said merrily, "I'll take Miss Harlow with me."

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within her veins. A few moments before she had been so calm, so happy, so trustful in Providence. And now a horrible death stared her in the face, look where she would; like an animal at bay she looked around her. Was there no escape? The roaring sound of the fire as it encircled the theatre with its devouring arms rose higher every minute.

Carruthers leapt towards her with a cry. "I will save you, my queen," he said exultingly. "I will save you, that you may share my throne, may live with me, and learn all the wonderful ways of love! Come to me, Hazel, my darling!"

The poor, distraught girl, gave a loud cry. Then her senses reeled. A black darkness grew over her brain. She fell forward, senseless, into the arms of the maniac. In a moment he had swung her off her feet, and pressing a kiss upon her cold forehead, dandled her in his arms as though she had been a child, endowed as he was with all the new-born strength that madness had given him.

And outside the room the roar of the flames grew louder and louder.

CHAPTER III.

HAZEL had scarcely left her lodgings, and proceeded to the theatre to keep the appointment with Carruthers, when Jenny Lovelace called to see her friend.

She was vexed to hear that Hazel had gone out. The landlady did not know where her lodger had gone, but she did not think that Miss Harlow would be long. Would Miss Lovelace step up stairs and wait a bit?

Miss Lovelace assented to this proposal and made her way to her friend's room. The first thing that caught her eye as she entered the apartment was a piece of notepaper lying upon the floor, Carruthers' note in fact, that Hazel had left when it had dropped from her hand.

Jenny picked it up, and recognising the handwriting in a moment as Carruthers' read it without any hesitation, curiosity, to find out what reason the actor could be writing to Hazel for, overcoming her scruples as regards the honourableness of her action.

The note only mystified her. "What a funny thing," she mused, "Carruthers making Hazel a confidante. I wonder what on earth he wants to tell her. It's past five now. I think I'll stroll round to the theatre and fetch Hazel away."

She hurried downstairs and out of the house. When she got near the theatre she found a crowd of people hurrying in the same direction.

"What is it?" she asked a man who passed her.

"Theatre a-fire!" came the astounding answer.

Jenny's heart seemed suddenly to stop beating. The theatre was on fire! And Hazel had gone to the place only a few minutes before. Surely she must be out of the building, though, by now. Jenny hurried on, a prey to the most sickening doubts and fears.

Arrived outside the theatre itself she found that already a large concourse of people had assembled, and the first fire-engine had dashed upon the scene.

Jenny forced her way round to the stage-door. It was there that the fire seemed to rage the fiercest. Tongues of flame were already shooting out of the windows. The police and firemen were forcing the people back.

"Thank God it was in the daytime," said a man's voice. "There was no one in the place but the stage door-keeper, and he's out by this time."

"No one there," cried Jenny agonizedly. "There is someone there! Miss Hazel Harlow is there!"

In a moment Jenny found herself the centre of an excited crowd, from whose faces all the colour had faded.

"The doorkeeper was so fast asleep they could not wake him." A man's voice cried out hoarsely. "A doctor said he must have been drugged, so of course he couldn't tell whether any one was inside."

"Miss Harlow, the beautiful actress inside the theatre," the cry went round on every side.

A man forced his way through the crowd, a tall, handsome, well-dressed man.

"Who says Miss Harlow's inside?" he cried in a stentorian voice.

"Mr. Monteith!" cried Jenny, recognising the man at once. "Save Miss Harlow!" she cried, helplessly.

Eric Monteith ground his teeth together.

"Then it is true!" he said hoarsely.

The next moment he had cleft a way through the crowd like magic, and stood beside the firemen and guarding cordon of police.

"Stand back there!" cried a policeman roughly.

"There's a woman inside the blazing theatre!" cried Eric. "I'm willing to volunteer to enter the place."

"A woman!"

"Miss Harlow."

"Miss Harlow!" Twenty voices seemed to echo the name. As if by magic an escape was run up alongside the building, now blazing away with fearful intensity.

Eric sprang up the steps of the long red structure. In his agony of mind he did not feel the angry tongues of fire that leapt out at him, took no heed of the pungent, acrid smoke that filled eyes and mouth and nostrils, heard not the shouts of the firemen.

One of the latter swung up the escape and practically hauled Eric down.

Monteith, almost mad with rage at being thus thwarted turned upon the helmeted fire-fighter, with something akin to murder in his eyes.

"How dare you, fellow," he said.

"Do you want to go to certain death?" retorted the other quickly. Then in a softer tone he went on: "It would be absolute madness to go inside the building now, sir, aye, absolute death. The fire's got hold of the place now."

The man spoke nothing more than the truth. Even where they stood the heat was terrific. So much so that the captain of the fire-brigade hurried forward and commanded Eric and the firemen to retire back.

Half-a-dozen steamers were at work now flinging huge streams of water over the blazing pile. Yet the conflagration was only an insatiable demon, whose thirst could not be quenched by such pigmy efforts.

"If anyone is inside that building," murmured one of the firemen in a low voice, "they are cinders by now."

The man did not speak unfeelingly. Eric heard him, and a great groan left his lips.

"Can nothing be done?" he cried.

"Nothing, sir. We could all sacrifice our lives uselessly, of course, but what use would that be?"

Eric turned away. His heart seemed to have died within him. It could not be true. Heaven could never have allowed Hazel to die. And yet Jenny Lovelace had positively asserted that the beautiful young actress, the woman whom Eric had learnt to love with all his heart and soul, was within the theatre.

Where was Miss Lovelace? Eric shouldered his way

back through the crowd, that sympathetically made place for him.

"Her sweetheart!" sobbed a woman.

"Her sweetheart!" echoed the men.

Yet the words fell unmeaningly, unheedingly on Eric's deadened faculties.

"Mr. Monteith!" It was Jenny's voice again. Eric looked up. Jenny was standing in the middle of a little knot of people, all members of the *Good Samaritan* company.

Raymond Venables was there, his face white as death, Pendennis, Lindsay, the other ladies of the company. Horror was on every countenance. "I can't believe it true," Venables was muttering.

Eric made straight for Jenny's side. "I must speak with you alone, Miss Lovelace," he said.

They drew apart. In a moment Jenny began hurriedly: "Oh, Mr. Monteith, I was in Hazel's room only a few minutes ago. I found a note upon the floor, that she must have dropped. It was from Carruthers, asking him to meet her in her dressing-room at five o'clock. At a quarter past five the theatre was well ablaze."

"Carruthers! The quiet young actor! what does it mean? Why did he ask her to meet him?"

For answer Jenny thrust the note in question into Monteith's hand. "I've shown it to no one else," she said. "I haven't dared."

Monteith read the missive carefully. Then an expression of horror left his lips.

"This Carruthers," he said quickly, "had he any grudge against Hazel?"

"No, no. I'm sure he had none. But—" Jenny looked round fearfully, though her apprehensions lest she should be overheard were egroundless, as the fire held everyone's attention. "I know he used to give way a good deal to drink."

"Then you think—"

"Oh, I don't know what to think. But I'm a woman, Mr. Monteith, and women take strange fancies. The stage-door keeper was drugged. Why? Can it be that Carruthers has set fire to the theatre, to make believe that he and Hazel have been burnt while really—"

"He has spirited her away somewhere! By heaven there may be something in that."

Jenny's words had suddenly put new life into Eric's heart. The girl's quick perception had hit upon the only possible shred of hope that Hazel was still alive. The only question was, what motive could Carruthers have had? At once the name of Horace Caldecott flashed across Eric's brain. Could this be another scheme of that arch-villain? The young man's blood ran cold at the thought. If so, perhaps at that very moment Hazel was in her greatest enemy's power. Either that or her charred corpse lay among the ruins of the blazing theatre. Each alternative was horrible. And yet if only she were alive! Anything would be preferable to a horrible death. For while there's life there's hope. So Eric's thoughts flew like shuttlecocks across his mind.

CHAPTER IV.

In the meantime how had it fared with the hapless Hazel. It will be remembered that we left her senseless and helpless in the arms of the maniac Carruthers, with the horrid fire-fiend already beating with his flaming hands against the door of the dressing-room.

At one end of this room was a window opening on to some narrow leads, that formed a path, as it were, between the roofs of two rows of somewhat squalid houses.

In a moment Carruthers had swept the toilet things off the table that stood beneath the window. Then he leapt upon the table in question, and having deposited the still unconscious body of his victim upon the floor, battered out the glass and woodwork of the window with a poker, that he had found in the fireplace.

This done, he jumped lightly down upon the ground, smiling all the while, and again seized Hazel in his arms.

Without any apparent effort he surmounted the table once again, and clambered out on to the leads, a feat that would have been absolutely impossible to him, had he been in a normal condition, taking into consideration his own somewhat puny frame and the lifeless burden in his arms.

Yet his madness had endowed him for the time being with supernatural strength. Once out upon the leads, and the task before him was comparatively easy. The roofs on either side of him cut off the leads from view, save from the theatre itself, for at the extreme end the blank wall of a factory towered. It was an ideal spot for the successful consummation of the madman's scheme.

With the air of a man who thoroughly knew his ground, Carruthers staggered on with his burden. His false strength was failing him. The dead weight in his arms was telling upon his overtaxed muscles.

At last he came to a pause before a window set in the slates. He had already passed three such, each one grimmer, if possible, than the other.

With great care he deposited Hazel upon the leads. Then he opened the window and peered cautiously inside the room with which it communicated.

The window was only a few feet above the floor of the attic, for such the chamber was. It was thus a comparatively easy matter to lower Hazel into the room. Carruthers swung lightly down after her and closed the window.

It was a narrow, bare apartment, the only furniture it could boast being a truckle bed in one corner, a pitcher of water, and two crazy chairs. Dust lay thick on every hand, from the corners hung great, matted cobwebs, the close smell that a long-uninhabited room always has permeated the miserable garret.

With almost grotesque tenderness Carruthers deposited his fair burden upon the bed. Then he sprinkled some water in her face. In a few minutes Hazel's eyes opened languidly.

"Where am I?" she murmured, as though waking from a dream.

"Safe, my darling," answered Carruthers ecstatically, "safe with your own Percy, who will never leave you again."

Hazel shuddered. The madman's words had brought everything back to her—the terrible scene in the dressing-room, the realisation that she was in the clutches of a lunatic, the fearful knowledge that she was alone in the burning theatre with such a being.

But the blank that followed all she knew for certain—what had happened since then? Where was she? How had she come there? How could she escape? Carruthers was bending over her, his eyes drinking in every detail of her face.

Half-frenzied with terror though she was, Hazel managed to keep her presence of mind. She must humour the madman. She was absolutely in his power. Speculation as to her present position must for the time cease. She would want all her faculties for the ordeal that lay before her now, the keeping of the enamoured madman at arm's length.

"Oh, Mr. Carruthers," she murmured. "I'm so hungry and thirsty. Can you give me something to eat and drink? I should be so grateful to you if you would."

"Hungry and thirsty! My Hazel hungry and thirsty! Then of course I will go and get my queen food and drink," answered the maniac, in a voice that was as tender as a mother's. Then his expression changed. "But first we must secure our little Hazel," he said. The next instant he had slipped a pair of handcuffs over Hazel's wrists, securing the irons firmly to the bed by a slender piece of strong chain. "Now I'll go and get food and drink," he muttered.

The next instant he had left the room. The sound of a bolt flying back into its socket told Hazel that she was indeed a prisoner.

She rose into a sitting posture, and endeavoured to break loose from her bonds. But Carruthers had done his work well. She was powerless to break free. A blank despair filled her heart. How could she hope to escape! She was in Carruthers' power—that is to say, in the grip of a madman who was capable of anything when once the last barrier of his reason was broken down.

His present attitude towards his captive seemed one of abject adoration, tempered, it is true, by his obvious determination to give her no opportunity to escape; yet no one could say how long such a state of mind might last. Once let passion break down the last remnants of his reason, and Hazel knew that she was doomed. Nothing but death could be her portion then.

The time dragged on with leaden limbs. Hazel had her watch. It was now past six o'clock. Why did not Carruthers return? Another hour passed away, and still there was no sign of the maniac.

Hazel had had plenty of time for reflection. What

puzzled her most was where she was and how she had come there. Beyond the fact that she was in the attic of a deserted house, she had no clue to guide her as to how she had come there. But, she reflected, it would have been impossible for Carruthers to have carried her out by the street and away to this place. This train of thought once set in motion, she speedily came to the only feasible explanation, and as we know the correct



"I did it, I, Percy Carruthers, did it so that you should be mine, mine, mine!"

one, that Carruthers had conveyed her over the roof.

Again she made a frantic effort to break loose from the handcuffs. But Carruthers had done his work well. She could not escape.

The shadows began to deepen in the gloomy garret as the September day drew to a close. A faint scratching in the wainscoting of the room betokened the presence of mice or rats. And still of Carruthers' return there was no sign. Hazel began to feel faint for want of food

and drink. With the exception of a cup of tea she had had nothing in the way of refreshment since midday. A fervent prayer went up to Heaven for strength and guidance in her terrible trial.

The time stole remorselessly on. The darkness grew deeper. A silence, broken only by the scratching of the rats in the mouldering walls, as of the grave reigned on every hand. Gradually the idea grew on Hazel that Carruthers had deserted her wilfully. He had left her alone to die.

She determined to cry for help. A scream left her lips. Then another. Then another. And still no sound fell on her ears to tell her that her cries were heard.

CHAPTER V.

PERCY CARRUTHERS crept down the crazy stairs of the deserted house in which Hazel was incarcerated. His footsteps, stealthy though they were, awoke strange, eerie echoes. At the street door he paused and listened intently. All seemed still, and he crept out, failing in his haste to secure the door behind him again.

The street he found himself in was a deserted one. For the purpose the madman had in view, the incarceration of Hazel Harlow, he could have found no better place. The alley was condemned, and was indeed about to come into the hands of the housebreakers. Another reason that militated against the probability of anyone being about, was that all Newcastle had been attracted to the blazing theatre.

As he reached the street into which the alley debouched the sound of the commotion round the theatre—ay, and the roaring of the flames, became visible. A wild light came into Carruthers' eyes. The next moment he had darted forward, and was speeding away in the direction of his own terrible handiwork.

An enormous crowd surged in front of the burning building. Carruthers rubbed his hands together in devilish glee. He had suddenly quite forgotten about Hazel. It was plain that the firemen were slowly mastering the blaze. The theatre was already practically gutted. Yet they had prevented the fire from spreading beyond the theatre. For a time Carruthers stood on the outskirts of the crowd. The dusk of evening drew over the scene, and still he remained gloating over the scene.

"I did it!" he muttered at last. "It's all my work!"

At that instant a voice sounded in his ears that acted like a cold douche. For one brief moment it gave him back his reason.

"Mr. Carruthers," said the voice agonisedly, "*what have you done with Hazel Harlow?*"

Carruthers looked up, his face bloodless, to confront Jenny Lovelace, by whose side was a tall, handsome, well-dressed man.

"Hazel Harlow!" he echoed faintly.

"Yes," cried the man. "Speak, or I'll shake the life out of you."

With a snarl like that of a wild beast Carruthers sprang forward. A thousand wheels seemed turning in his brain. Letters of fire danced before his eyes! Kill! kill! kill! was what he read.

He hurled himself at Eric Monteith's—Jenny's companion—throat. The impetuosity of the madman's unexpected attack threw him backwards. Carruthers' fingers were at his throat—terrible, sinuous, wire-like fingers they seemed. He tried to beat his assailant off. He felt unconsciousness seizing hold of him. He was being throttled to death.

Suddenly the fingers relaxed. A terrible cry broke from the madman's lips. "Through the dressing-room window!" he muttered hoarsely, as though in answer to some unspoken question. The next moment he grew stiff and rigid. A few fierce convulsions shook his limbs. And so Percy Carruthers died—smitten down suddenly by the hand of God.

For a few moments Eric could not believe that the man was dead. A policeman raised up the body, and placed his hand over his heart. The bystanders pressed round in horror.

"Do you know this—dead man?" he asked.

"No," answered Monteith truthfully.

"I did," put in Jenny hysterically, yet striving to keep calm. "His name was Carruthers. He was a member of *The Good Samaritan* company, to which I also belong." Then she looked piteously at Monteith. "I can't tell all I know here," she said.

"Come along to the station, Miss," said the constable sympathetically. "And you, too, sir," to Eric. He sent a boy for a cab.

When the vehicle came up the body of the hapless Carruthers was placed in it.

"You drive on," said Monteith to the constable. "This lady and I will follow you."

As they proceeded towards the station, Eric suddenly turned to his comrade.

"Miss Lovelace," he said, "can you describe to me what Miss Harlow's dressing-room at the theatre is like?"

Jenny looked at him with a puzzled expression. "Why, yes," she said. "It was a small room, with a window at one end opening on to some leads. Her make-up table was set beneath the window, and had a looking-glass on it. There was a fireplace in the room. That's all."

"But the window—could one get out by it?"

Jenny thought for a moment. "I should think so," she said finally. "But why do you ask?"

"Because poor Carruthers' dying words were: 'Through the dressing-room window.' I could only just catch them; but he seemed to be answering your question in some sort of way: 'What have you done with Hazel Harlow?' It is in the bounds of possibility that he escaped through the window. And if he escaped, then why not Miss Harlow?"

"But where can she be now?"

Eric shook his head. "I don't know," he said; "but I'm going round to the back of the theatre to see if I can find out any houses upon which the dressing-room window opened. Can you tell me which way the window faces?"

Jenny thought for a minute. "It has a gleam of late afternoon sun," she said thoughtfully, "so it would face west."

"Good. Then will you go to the police-station and tell them there I'll report myself later?" And without more ado Eric hurried off, his heart beating high with hope renewed.

There was still a great crowd round the theatre, though the fire had been got under hand by now. Gaunt and grim the blackened ruin looked, with its bare smoke-grimed walls and gaping casements silhouetted darkly against the darker sky beyond.

For night had set in now. The hum of many voices rose up round the still smouldering structure.

"Poor Miss Harlow," Eric heard a voice mutter. "To think that that beautiful young lady has perished in the flames."

"Ay, and there was another there, too," put in the voice of a man, evidently better posted than his neighbour. "The doorkeeper has recovered from his fit of sleep, or, call it what you will. He says that a Mr. Carruthers, one of the actors, went in before Miss Harlow. This same Carruthers gave him a drink of doctored spirits. Looks like foul play, says I."

Eric drew a long breath. So the whole story was public property now. He hurried on, intent on tracing the mystery of Hazel's fate to its end.

He took his bearings as well as he could. If the dressing-room window faced west, he must trace his steps westwards. And thus a natural sequence of deduction led him into the narrow, deserted alley, the street in which the very house was where Carruthers had deposited the hapless Hazel.

Here Eric found himself brought to a check. He had no data to guide him in a further search. Should he enter one of the houses and investigate the roofs? That seemed the best plan.

Suddenly a faint cry fell on his ears. The blood rushed from his face. His pulses began to drum madly. Again the cry rang out.

He dashed down the gloomy alley. Ah! Again that scream. Then silence, save for the roar of the city's traffic close at hand.

Half frenzied between hope and fear, Eric began to try the doors of the houses. The first two were bolted. Mechanically he pushed on.

The third door flew open before his touch. Good heavens! The coincidence brought him back to his senses. Why should that one door be unlatched?

Without pausing to consider possible dangers, he stumbled up the rickety stairs. The top of the house, he knew instinctively, must be his goal.

A door facing the stair-head brought him up. It was locked. The key was in the door.

The bolt swung back from rusty wards. Another instant and he was in a room, dark as the grave, and almost as silent.

Fearfully, apprehensively, he struck a match. A low groan escaped his lips as the tiny flame showed him a grimy apartment with a truckle-bed in the corner, upon which was stretched the inanimate form of a woman.

He leapt forward. One glance at the deathly-white face told him that it was indeed the girl he loved better than all else in the world, Hazel Harlow, snatched miraculously out of the jaws of a fiery tomb.

Out of the tomb! Was she alive? A hasty examination revealed the blessed fact that she had swooned.

"Thank God!" muttered Eric. "Thank God!" And tears of heartfelt gratitude to Heaven gathered in his eyes—tears that were no womanly confession of weakness. He had not dared hope for this.

CHAPTER VI.

THE astounding story of Hazel's escape soon got into the papers, and there was probably no manager in London who would not have offered Hazel an important rôle on the strength of the incident.

As for Hazel herself, it was with the utmost reluctance that she could be got to speak of the terrible adventure at all.

Only to Eric and Jenny, her saviours, did she supply the missing links of the story. The reporter from the *Courier* had perforce to draw on his own journalistic imagination.

As for Eric, he could not refrain from again urging on Hazel what he had before made insistent—that she should give up a life that had already brought her such terrible experiences.

But Hazel, like many another woman, weak about certain things, was on this point adamant. "I have put my hand to the plough," she said gently, "and there can be no turning back. Heaven knows that the adventures that have befallen me were none of my seeking. No, kindest and best of friends, don't urge me any more. My mind is made up."

The fire at the theatre meant a serious loss to Raymond Venables. The insurance of his company's effects did not cover all that had been lost. And the tour list must be gone on with. To break his future contracts spelt ruin.

They were due the next week at Rugby, and somehow or other fresh properties must be obtained. Then, again, the loss of the unhappy man Carruthers, apart from its own peculiar sadness, meant the finding of another man to fill the dead man's shoes.

Venables convened a meeting of his company. "I take it, ladies and gentlemen," he said, "you are all agreed, that we cannot abandon our tour. I will go to London at once and secure fresh properties. On Monday I will be at Rugby. Your time till then must be your own."

The company were unanimous in continuing the tour. Venables departed, somewhat cheered. On his way to the station he encountered Monteith.

"Mr. Venables," said Eric, "will you give me the part vacated by the unfortunate man who lost his life yesterday? I don't want any salary, and I think I can undertake the small part. I have seen the piece more than once. What do you say?"

Venables looked curiously at the young man.

"Has Miss Harlow's presence in the company anything to do with this whim of yours?" he said slowly.

Eric flushed. "I will not deny that you are right," he answered. "But you need not think that I want to become an actor solely to make love to Miss Harlow. In the first place, she doesn't care for me any more than for any other man. Secondly, I hope I am a gentleman."

Raymond Venables' face cleared, and he held out his hand.

"It's a fair field and no favour, then," he said somewhat mysteriously. "And as to salary, I must beg you to accept thirty shillings a week—what the poor fellow Carruthers was getting. We shall have to have a couple of rehearsals at Rugby. Please be word perfect. The part is a small one, but even small parts want good acting."

"Thank you," said Eric, "I will not fail you."

And so he parted from his new manager. A more tranquil feeling had taken possession of him. At any rate, should there be danger in Hazel's path in the future, he would be at hand to guard her. As to his histrionic abilities, he had not much fear about them.

Thus did Eric Monteith bind himself to be knight-errant for the girl whom he loved, and whose life he had twice saved.

But for Hazel Harlow there was not as yet the dawn of love.

[The next place on the tour-list of *The Good Samaritan* company was Rugby. In the Warwickshire town Hazel Harlow was to be confronted with yet another adventure of absorbing interest. Readers of *SHORT STORIES* cannot afford to miss this thrilling narrative.]



My Strange Fellow Passenger.

BY J. L. HORNIBROOK.

THE man sitting opposite me in the corner of the smoking carriage was beginning to get on my nerves.

For the last hour or so he had been growing more restless and strange in his manner every minute. His long, thin, trowel-shaped face twitched at times in a curious spasmodic way that was rather calculated to make one jump; his eyes smouldered with sullen fire; and more than once he brought his clenched fist down upon his knee with a sounding thump. He took no more notice of me than if I was at the other end of the train; and as we were alone in the carriage, I confess that I did not feel altogether comfortable.

I consoled myself, however, with the reflection that Broxburn, where I had to alight in order to reach my uncle's place, was only two stations further on, when I would be rid of my strange fellow passenger once and for all.

At our next stoppage my attention was drawn away from him for the time being by catching sight of my old friend, Tom Richards, upon the platform. I sung out to him, and he came across towards the window at once.

"Hullo, Ashcroft!" he cried, in his breezy way. "Going down to the Grange, eh? They are expecting you, I know. I was over there yesterday, and—Good Lord!" he exclaimed, under his breath, checking himself suddenly, and staring past me into the carriage as if he was quite flabbergasted.

I did not wonder at his astonishment. My unknown friend had moved away to the opposite window, and was staring out of it at the moment; but at the very mention of my name his head came round with a jerk, and his eyes fastened upon me in a curious devouring kind of way. The next second one of those strange facial contortions seized upon him, which was quite enough to startle anyone who happened to be unprepared for it.

Richards, with a very blank face, motioned me to bring my head nearer.

"Who the dickens have you got in there?" he whispered.

"Haven't the least idea," I answered. "I've been treated to this sort of thing all the way down."

"Well, judging by that start he gave just now, he seems to know more about you than you do about him."

I thought it rather odd, for I had certainly never laid eyes upon the man before, and why my name should have aroused his interest was more than I could imagine.

"They are all well at the Grange, I suppose?" I said, changing the subject. "My uncle, and—and—"

"Miss Constance, eh?" chimed in Richards, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. "Oh, yes; they are both tip-top. Take care of yourself, old boy," he called out, as the train began to move. "See you again in a day or two."

I settled back in my corner, trying to look unconscious of the fact that the stranger was still regarding me in the same fixed, searching manner. The tables were now turned with a vengeance! Instead of my staring at him, it was him who was staring at me, never once allowing his gaze to wander. I did not like it at all. The concentrated glare of his black glowing eyes gave me a most uncomfortable sensation, as if two burning rays were playing full upon me.

I took up a paper, held it in front of me, and made a pretence to read. But it was no use; I instinctively felt that the man's eyes were still upon me. His gaze seemed to burn its way through the flimsy sheet, and transfix me as before. In despair, I tossed the paper aside, deliberately turned my back upon him, and fell to studying the view from the carriage window.

It was with a certain sense of relief that I stepped from the train at Broxburn, for I felt as if I were emerging from some oppressive atmosphere into the open air, and

could breathe freely again. As I walked off down the platform, curiosity prompted me to glance back over my shoulder; and there, at the carriage window, I saw the stranger, staring after me in the most persistent manner. Whether he got out or not I cannot say, but he certainly made a movement as if to do so just as I turned away.

At the Grange I received a very cordial welcome from uncle Roger, whom I had not seen for six months, and—well, yes, from the Miss Constance whom Richards had alluded to.

Let me just say here that there was a tinge of romance, if not of mystery, connected with Constance Heathcote and the manner in which she first became an inmate of the Grange. Several years before—according to Mrs. Warne, the housekeeper, who was my informant—my uncle received a letter one morning which seemed to upset him greatly. Within an hour he was off somewhere in hot haste, leaving word that he might not be back for a week. At the end of that time he returned, leading by the hand a child—a pretty, winsome little thing—the very sight of whom captivated Mrs. Warne's motherly heart on the spot. My uncle handed the little one over to her, said that her name was Constance, and

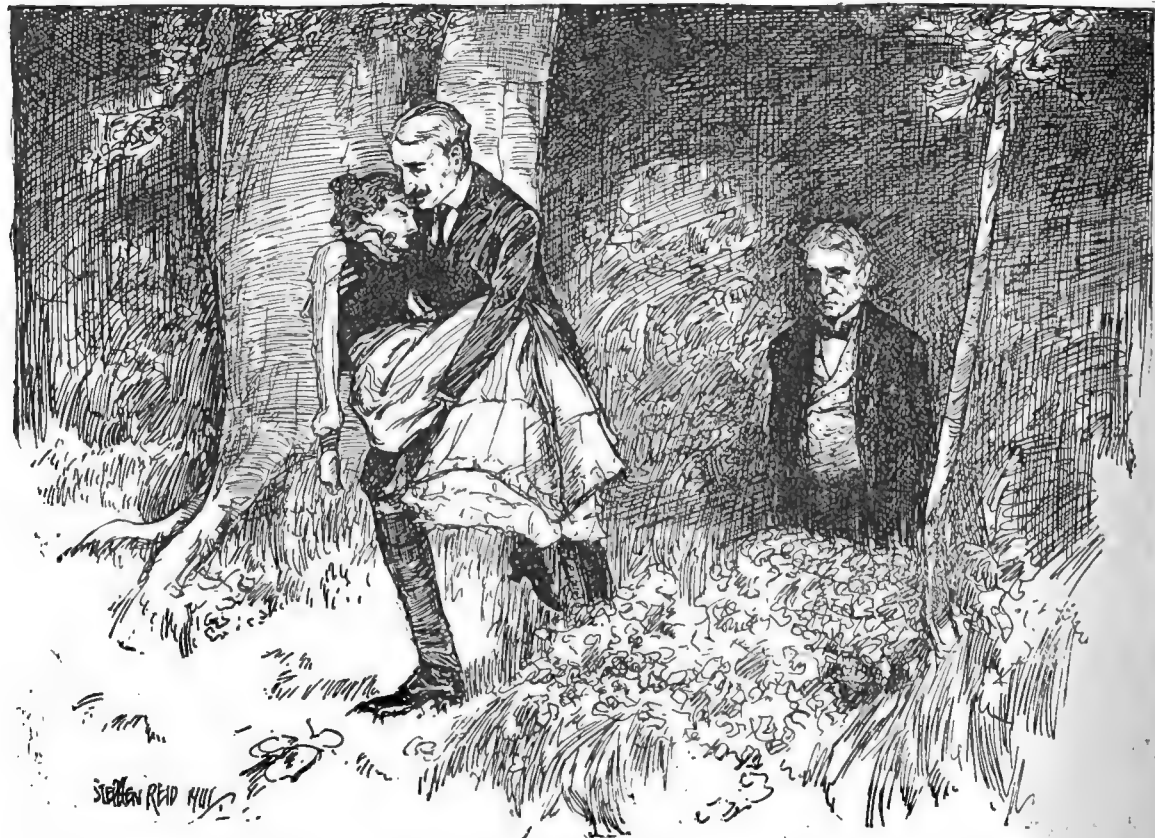
that she was to be treated in every respect as if she were his own daughter—and said no more.

And a daughter Constance became to him as she grew up, twining herself round his heart in a manner peculiar to her. On his part, he thought there was no one in the world like her—an opinion which was cordially endorsed by one other member of the family at least.

For the remainder of the day I was much too occupied with Constance to give a thought to the man in the train. The whole thing slipped from my memory, indeed, and was only recalled by an incident which occurred that same evening.

My uncle, who was of a studious turn of mind, was much given to chemical research, and usually took himself off to his laboratory soon after dinner. For myself, as Constance had left us some little time before, I sauntered out into the grounds to enjoy a quiet cigar.

I was strolling up and down on the velvety sward at the side of the house, indulging in the pleasing occupation of day-dreaming, when a dark, gliding figure passed quickly between me and the skyline, and disappeared into the shrubs at the other side of the tennis lawn. Though I had only a momentary glimpse of it, it instantly brought back to my mind the strange-looking



Taking her up in my arms, I bore her back to the house.

being I had encountered in the train that morning. I could have sworn it was the same man.

I hurried across to the spot where I had seen him disappear; but though I hunted through the bushes for some little time, I failed to discover a trace of anyone lurking there.

Considerably puzzled, I returned to the house, thinking that I ought to make known the circumstance to my uncle. With this object in view I sought him out in his laboratory, where I found him pottering about amongst his jars and phials, up to his eyes in scientific research.

"By the way, uncle," I said, perching myself on a corner of the table, and picking up a queer-looking fossil which I found at hand, "I had a rather curious experience coming down in the train to-day."

"What was that?" he mumbled, sniffing thoughtfully at a bottle, the stopper of which he had just withdrawn.

I started to tell him, glancing down at the fossil meanwhile, but before I had got very far my account was cut short by a sudden crash of glass at the other end of the room. Looking up, quickly I was astounded to find my uncle staring at me in a kind of horrified, open-eyed stupor, that had something almost uncanny in it. The bottle had fallen from his nerveless fingers, and the brownish liquid it contained was slowly spreading itself out on the floor.

I was off the table and across the room in an instant. "What is it?" I cried. "What's the matter?"

For all the notice he took, I might just as well have addressed the empty air. He seemed stunned—stupified. The look in his eyes shocked and alarmed me, and I laid my hand hastily upon his arm.

"Uncle," I said, "do try and pull yourself together. If Constance should happen to come in——"

That one word, "Constance," seemed to electrify him into life. With a sudden, sharp cry, he shook me off, sprang towards the door, and dashed headlong from the room.

I was after him in an instant, but in his frantic haste he easily outstripped me.

"Constance! Constance!" I heard him cry, as he rushed wildly from one room to another.

But Constance was nowhere to be found!

In less than a minute the whole house was in a turmoil. The servants, attracted by my uncle's cries, came crowding into the hall with startled, questioning faces, but they could give no account of the girl. At last one of them declared that she must have strolled out into the grounds, as she had been seen to put on her hat some time before.

This information appeared to dismay uncle Roger, and he was through the door almost before one of us could move. I waited a moment to give directions to the servants, and then hurried out after him. By that time, however, he had disappeared, in what direction I could not tell.

Without an instant's delay I made for the shrubs at the other side of the tennis lawn, a strange, sinking fear in my heart. Though I could not imagine what had happened, I felt that the presence of the man I had seen a while ago boded no good.

My second search among the bushes was as futile as the first. Hot, palpitating, breathless, I paused to look around me. Where could the girl have gone?

I then remembered that some distance further on,

hidden away among the trees, there was an old ivied ruin, which was a favourite resort of Constance's in the daytime. Thinking that she might possibly have wandered towards this spot, I bolted off in that direction at once.

I was rushing madly through the trees, when, just as I got within sight of the ruin, I almost tumbled headlong over a prostrate figure, and found to my horror that it was Constance!

She was lying there in a dead faint, her white, inanimate face upturned to the sky. Not far from the spot was a heavy cloak and a man's hat, which seemed to indicate that an attempt had been made to carry her off, but was fortunately frustrated in some way.

Just as I was bending over her a sound came from a little hollow on the right that thrilled me with a vague horror and alarm. It was something that resembled a fierce, worrying snarl, followed almost immediately by a kind of choking gurgle.

I sprang towards the spot, and down there I saw my unfortunate uncle lying on the ground, a man kneeling upon his chest and gripping him by the throat with both hands. One glance was enough to show me that his assailant was the stranger I had met in the train.

I hurled myself upon the wretch, but it was only after a desperate struggle that I was able to tear him off. Then he suddenly collapsed, falling at my feet in a kind of fit.

I hastened to get my uncle on his feet, and assisted him to the spot where Constance was lying. Taking her up in my arms, I bore her back to the house, uncle Roger staggering along after us with feeble, uncertain steps.

When I had seen them both in good hands, I called to the groom and gardener, and we hurried off again towards the ruin. The cloak and hat were still lying on the same spot, but the man himself had disappeared.

* * * * *

It was not until the following day that my uncle was in a condition to afford any explanation of this singular affair, which had so very nearly ended fatally for him. When he summoned me to his room, I was shocked to see the livid finger-marks still on his throat.

"Who was that man, uncle?" was the first question I asked.

"His name is Robert Harding," he answered; "and he is——" he paused, and looked at me with a pained expression upon his kindly face.

"What?" I asked.

"Constance's father!"

"Her father!" I gasped; for the announcement quite staggered me.

"Alas! it is so," he replied. "Listen, my boy; I will tell you the whole sad story. If I have kept it from you hitherto, it was only because I dreaded lest any word of it should come to our dear girl's ears.

"You must know," he went on, "that there has been a little romance in my early life, the memory of which has remained with me ever since. Long years ago I was deeply attached to Constance's mother, Isabella Heathcote. I believe that my love was returned; but unfortunately her parents forced her into a marriage with this man Harding.

"It proved a most unhappy, a miserable union. From the first Harding treated his wife with harshness and neglect, squandered her money, and was often brutally

violent in his temper. Even when their little daughter was born, it wrought no change in him. He was a man of the most vicious tendencies, and he gave free rein to his passions at all times.

"I need not go through the whole wretched story. It is enough to say that he went from bad to worse, until he finally deserted his wife and child altogether.

"They were left utterly penniless, poor things; and only that I was able, through an indirect channel, to keep them from want, I tremble to think how they would have fared.

"One night, several months after he had disappeared, Harding turned up again, looking wild and desperate. He told his wife that he had got into trouble, and that he must have two hundred pounds by the next day in order to settle the matter and prevent prosecution.

"Whether or not he had discovered the source from which their supplies had come during his absence I cannot say. At any rate, he ordered her to apply to me at once for the money. She refused point blank to do anything of the kind.

"He was a man of ungovernable temper at all times; and now, as nothing he could say would induce her to consent, he flew into a frenzy of passion. Seizing her by the throat, he flung her from him so forcibly that she never recovered the effects of the fall. Then he fled, but was captured soon afterwards and sentenced to penal servitude.

"I knew nothing of all this at the time; but on her death-bed his poor wife sent for me, told me the whole miserable story, and committed little Constance to my care. I brought the child home here, vowing that never again should she fall into the hands of her brutal father. I called her by her mother's name, which was always dear to me.

"I have lived in constant dread that when Harding regained his liberty he would seek to claim her from me, and you can understand my dismay last night when I heard from you that he was in this neighbourhood. Knowing that he would encounter opposition, it must have occurred to him to lay in wait and carry her off by force. Though that attempt failed, it is still open to him to set the law in motion, which no doubt is his intention. As her legal guardian, he can compel me to give her up in the end. And now, how are we to prevent it?"

I was silent for a long time, turning the whole thing over in my mind; and then I thought I saw a way out of the difficulty.

"No doubt he could claim her under present circumstances," I said. "But he could not do so if——"

"If what?" he asked.

"If she had a husband, for instance."

He brightened up at once.

"And the proposed husband?" he said, looking straight at me.

"Is not very far off," I answered.

"My dear boy!" he said, cordially wringing my hand, "it is what I have wished for all along. And if I know anything," he added, with conviction, "Constance herself will raise no great obstacles to this solution of the difficulty."

And she did not.

"CLARIBEL, when we are wed, your pathway shall be eternally strewn with roses." "Pathway? Then you expect me to foot it everywhere, I suppose?"

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The GOLDEN DWARF

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SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS OF "GOLDEN DWARF."

"It is the body of Sir Christopher Dering!"

The words are spoken by a pretty girl—fair-haired, blue-eyed. She stands, horrified, by a grass-grown ditch in a country lane, out of which a great mastiff is climbing. The ditch contains the corpse of a stalwart man—a handkerchief bound over his mouth and nostrils.

Close to there is a strange figure, graceful, well-dressed, even handsome, but with the stature of a boy and the face of an adult. He carries a heavy dog-whip, and stares, fixedly, at the dead body just discovered by his mastiff, Cerberus.

The girl is Esther Carew; the dwarf, Otto Hare, the richest landowner in Derbyshire, and the mystery of Wyrnsdale, a village in that county. For the first time in fifteen years he has set foot in a public thoroughfare, to attract the attention of Esther, whom he has watched from his park.

Sir Christopher Dering was alive at seven o'clock the preceding day. He and his nephew, Felix, had quarrelled over the latter's love for Esther. Sir Christopher wanted Felix to make a good marriage—the birth of his little cousin Brian has put him out of the succession to the baronetcy. Felix is faithful to the penniless Esther Carew.

Much turns on the whereabouts of Felix on the night before. It appears that he was in Duchester, some miles off, whither he went on business, and spent a night at the theatre. Could he have killed the squire?

Felix in vain protests his innocence.

But the cloud of suspicion gathers around him. Meantime, the child Brian has been kidnapped, and Felix is suspected of this too. He discovers a riding whip with some peculiar marks upon it.

One day an old sailor named Foley is attacked by Otto Hare's dogs.

Kraft is summoned to dress the wound, and gives Foley a draught.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"SHE WORSHIPS FELIX DERING."

"THERE, Miss Carew, that is as much as I can show you—not very exciting, I fear, but worth a glimpse, nevertheless."

Otto Hare abandoned the lens of the great telescope, and, descending from the species of moveable platform which served as a seat, left it to his young companion.

Esther roused—she had been absorbed in listening for a recurrence of the sound that, reaching her ears in so unlikely a quarter, had startled her into conjecture. She climbed to the position vacated by the Golden Dwarf and peeped through the large instrument.

A moment she gazed—then withdrew her eyes from the lens. "I can see little or nothing, Mr. Hare," she confessed; "only a huge pink ball and a blot or two in the middle of it."

She was answered by a tolerant smile. "The sun is of slight interest to any but experts," admitted Otto Hare, leaning on the observer's carriage; "it is at this end of the telescope, for instance, that I find my favourite star."

He glanced about him—the German, Zorn, had taken his lean figure and dull orbs away; the Golden Dwarf,

save for Esther Carew, was alone in the singular building which apparently did duty for such a simple scientific purpose. Otto Hare pointed to a thin spiral staircase, running up the interior of the taper edifice.

"That leads to the dome," he said; "or rather to a gallery round the dome. It was the gallery made me call this my watch-tower. From it, by a rift in the foliage of the park, I was able to notice you as you came and went to the Rosery. Thus I knew you—or seemed to—before I learned your name by frightening you so terribly with my poor Cerberus."

Esther shuddered. "Cerberus was the big dog which—which discovered Sir Christopher's body?" she murmured, "it is horrible to think how close he was to us all the time and we never dreamed of it. What—what happened to it?" she added; "Cerberus, I mean."

Otto Hare glanced at his repeater. "Oh," he explained uneasily; "it met with an accident and died. But let us forget Cerberus and everything he stands for. He was part of my isolation, the hermit existence I have put behind me."

He laid a tiny hand on the padded end of the carriage in which she sat; Esther marked the size and splendour of the diamond he wore.

"Can you not guess," he queried, looking into her flushed and downcast face, "why I have flung myself out into the world as I have done, after fifteen years' solitude? Will you not comprehend that it is you who have drawn me forth and made me pant to live the life of my fellows. I am rich—you have rendered my wealth valueless but to give you pleasure: I am powerful—you have reduced my ambitions to this, the desire to execute your wishes."

"Please, Mr. Hare," begged Esther, trying to rise, "please do not speak to me like that—it is no use. Oh, I am very, very sorry for you, but, as I have told you, I love someone else."

The Golden Dwarf set his white teeth; his small, aristocratic features contracted savagely.

"You hate me because I am what I am," he snarled; "yes, you do, Miss Carew, and I will be revenged on you—on you and on Felix Dering, the man you love for his strength and his inches."

Esther shrank from the fierce gaze of the Golden Dwarf and the malignant attitude of his athletic, though diminutive frame. But his attack upon Felix stung her.

"I love Mr. Dering because he is noble and generous," she cried; "if he were poor, as—indeed, he is—and a cripple into the bargain, I would love him for himself."

Otto Hare's countenance relaxed into a ghastly smile. "There is a peculiar kind of crippling, Miss Carew," he

retorted, "that your love would find it difficult to survive. It is the injury inflicted by the rope and the scaffold of the common executioner—a broken neck."

With this frightful jest, the Golden Dwarf caught her soft palms and grasped them as a vice might have done.

"Repulse me," he hissed, "and I will have Felix Dering hanged as high as Haaman—hanged for the murder of his uncle. I have a witness who could doom him to the gallows as surely as a judge in the black cap."

Otto Hare threw himself on his knees by the paralysed girl, and covered her fingers with burning kisses. She felt helpless before his diabolical threat; the contact of his lips scorched her like hot iron. Rallying her courage, she snatched her wrists out of his clutch.

"Mr. Dering is innocent," she declared; "I do not believe you could even make him seem guilty."

The Golden Dwarf struggled for self-control; his dark skin was purple and his brow knotted with swollen veins.

"You challenge me?" he muttered; "I accept the challenge—I will satisfy you both of Dering's guilt and my power to prove it. In two days you may still loathe, but you *shall* fear me."

Half fainting, Esther tottered from the light carriage under the lens of the telescope, and gained the floor of the tower. As she did so the sound that she had heard already floated to her once more, far-off, indistinct, but unmistakably significant. This time it evidently reached the Golden Dwarf.

A look of embarrassment, almost of terror, crossed his face, and he touched, hastily, the button of a bell. The German responded to the imperative peal—a gaunt, pale form, the antithesis of his compatriot, Kraft.

"Zorn," said Otto Hare, and he spoke now in English, "the machines downstairs are running noisily—see to them." He added a rapid sentence in a foreign tongue.

The German bowed—the German fashion; feet together, arms in front, knees stiff. He was not over middle-age, and might have been much more youthful than he appeared. The bow finished, he turned about in a military manner and vanished through an opening that continued the spiral staircase into the basement of the tower.

The Golden Dwarf followed Esther's glance. "There is an electric installation on a lower level," he supplemented—"it feeds the house lamps, and some ventilators. But the vibrations interfere with the instruments; I am thinking of having it removed. You can hear at a considerable distance the throb of the gas-engine that turns the dynamos."

Esther listened—the muffled palpitations of machinery could indeed be perceived. Yet the sound was not that which had so forcibly attracted her attention.

Otto Hare watched her; he was nervous and agitated. "Pardon my little outburst of temper a moment ago, Miss Carew," he murmured. "But you distract me when you insist on espousing the cause of that rascal Dering; I will certainly fulfil my promise to convince you of his worthlessness. Permit me at present, however, to take you back to your mother."

He thrust wide the double exit of the tower, and escorted Esther towards the lawn, still melodious with the dance-music of the Hungarian band and bright with the gay costumes of his feminine guests.

Not a few curious glances were fixed on them as they joined the group about Mrs. Carew—Esther, fragile and drooping as a lily, Otto Hare stern and upright. Most of those who scrutinised the couple hazarded a guess that the Golden Dwarf had been proposing to the girl at his side, and that she, doubtless well-schooled by her mother, had accepted him. "A strange bridegroom," thought all, yet there were few women among

his visitors who would not have grasped, themselves, at the offer of Otto Hare's heart and fortune.

Mrs. Carew was not so satisfied as to the success of her darling scheme. Her penetration revealed to her the weariness in her daughter's bearing, the sullen discontent in the Golden Dwarf's demeanour. There was not even between them the polite if cold understanding of a mercenary betrothal. Mrs. Carew's victory was yet to win, and she was aware of it.

When she could steal a moment from the departing guests (Otto Hare's return had been seized upon as an opportunity for a score of effusive farewells) she glided to Esther.

"What has Mr. Hare been doing or saying that you look so doleful?" she inquired, affecting an indifference she did not feel. Her daughter looked away into the quiet blue of the August sky.

"He has threatened and insulted me," answered Esther, slowly; "here, in his own grounds. My hands tingle with the kisses he forced on me. He wishes me to marry him, though I do not love him, though he knows I love another man."

"Pshaw!" whispered her mother, "you exaggerate, Esther, absurdly; Mr. Hare is fond of you to distraction. If he has been a trifle ardent it is a compliment any girl would be proud of from so handsome and distinguished a suitor."

Esther shivered. "Mamma," she said; "you make me ashamed—ashamed of being your child."

Mrs. Carew pinched her cheek. "You are the least bit impertinent, dear," she retorted; "but I forgive you—you are unnerved. And now to get rid of the nobodies; the smart people have gone in a flock—our own sex to discuss you, my dear, the men to envy Mr. Hare."

She moved off, laughing, and began to distribute adieux to the nonentities of the garden-party. The Golden Dwarf waited till she was disengaged and the last wheel had rolled down the avenue. Then he paused by her, knitting his brows.

"I have no pretty news for you, Mrs. Carew," he said, sneeringly, "and yet I venture to believe I have produced a strong impression on your daughter's mind."

The widow sighed. "You are very kind and patient, Mr. Hare," she assured him; "Esther is so wilful. But I, too, have hopes. There, go, and let me have a brougham immediately. I want to whisk her home before she has a nervous breakdown."

Mrs. Carew tapped him maternally with her fan. "Your wooing, Mr. Hare," she said, "does not err in the matter of restraint. With Esther that is imprudent. Appeal to her head rather than to her emotions."

The Golden Dwarf muttered an indistinguishable apology, and went to order the vehicle desired by the widow. On its arrival at the white stone portico he handed them into it, scarcely speaking to Esther. Yet as he took leave of her he contrived to whisper, "In two days, remember." Esther did not raise her glance to his—she was numbed by anxiety for Felix Dering.

Their diminutive host surveyed the retreating brougham, almost lost in a cloud of dust, yet growing smaller and smaller in the vista of the avenue.

"She shall be mine," murmured Otto Hare; "if I die for it, she shall be mine."

He played with his jewelled repeater and watched the avenue—a familiar shape had emerged from the dust thrown up by the brougham; it was that of Joseph Kraft. The Golden Dwarf hastened to meet him.

"Where have you been?" the big German was asked; "have you struck Foley's trail?"

Kraft stroked his pink chin and smiled. "He will

not trouble us again," vouchsafed his thin, humorous lips; "he is past cure, if he be not actually defunct."

The Golden Dwarf grew livid, then red. "So Cerberus is avenged," he rejoined.

"Cerberus be—anathematised," growled Kraft; "I have completed your bungling attempt, and delivered us out of the clutches of an obstinate and clumsy black-mailer."

"You have delivered us!" exclaimed Otto Hare; "he has not died from the bite Mahmud gave him?"

"Not he," said the other; "he died, if he be yet dead, of a rare South African poison—the sap of an obscure Brazilian herb. But enough of Foley—how have you progressed with Miss Carew?"

CHAPTER XXXII.

"GIVE ME BACK MY CHILD."

"Lift him up gently, sir; oh, if we had only a drop of spirits! It's a piece of hard luck for me if he's gone."

Inspector Brasher was stooping over the prostrate form of Nicholas Foley. He took the sailor's head and shoulders into his own strong arms and raised them to the level of his knee.

Felix Dering obeyed the command, and together the two men deposited the third upon the unsteady hammock that hung in a corner of the bare room. Foley's neck was limp and a red stain on the bandages about the sailor's throat had spread.



"In two days, remember," Esther did not return his glances—she was numbed by anxiety for Felix Dering.

The Golden Dwarf spat out an awful oath. "She worships Felix Dering," was his vicious response; "we must terrify her into surrender. Bring down your honest Londoner, Kraft—your boasted Neal Garland: we shall have need of all his—honesty."

Joseph Kraft tossed away a half-smoked cigar. "So that is the plan," he said; "well, I suggested it myself, and I suppose we shall have to go through with it. But to be frank, Hare, I feel an instinct that it will prove unlucky."

"Rubbish!" ejaculated Otto Hare; "I see no alternative, and I will not relinquish her, Kraft, for fifty Felix Derings. Write to Garland to-night."

They turned back to the portico, the German pondering as he walked. In the hall, he snapped his fingers.

"A fig for instinct," he cried, with the air of one who arrives at a decision; "Mr. Garland shall revisit Wyresdale."

"What's in yonder bottle?" queried Michael Brasher. His share of the movement just executed had brought him face to face with a low chimney-piece; on it was perched a fat flask bearing a suggestive label, and half full of a colourless fluid. By it stood a tin cup and a pannikin of the same metal.

Felix went and investigated these articles—the bottle contained whisky, the pannikin water; the cup had been emptied to the last drain.

Hastily he poured some of the spirit into the smaller receptacle, and diluting it to a nominal extent, poured it between the sailor's lips. The liquor overflowed the irresponsive mouth—Nicholas Foley could not swallow. Mr. Brasher tore open the breast of the blue bed-gown and laid a palm upon the tattooed skin—not a tremor disturbed the powerful muscles and lean flanks of the mariner; the sailor was dead.

With a profound sigh the Inspector set aside the tin

cup and straightened his tall frame. "Slipped through my fingers, by Jupiter!" he exclaimed.

Felix Dering gazed thoughtfully at the police-officer, whose exact attitude towards himself he would have given so much to ascertain. Mr. Brasher was puzzled by the glance, it seemed fearless and intelligent. Felix had shaken off the despondence and melancholy that had hung about him since the murder of Sir Christopher Dering.

"You talk in riddles, Mr. Brasher," he observed, studying the swarthy corpse before them; "had you some reason to take a professional interest in Foley?"

Brasher stroked his trim black beard. "Of a sort, yes," Felix was told: "pardon me, Mr. Dering, if I ask you what you happened to know of the—deceased?"

The Inspector bent, drew the flaps of the blue bed-gown to athwart the deep chest, and arranged an end of the sailor's blanket over the distorted visage. Felix hesitated to answer the question, so simply yet so directly put.

"I—I had grounds," he returned, after a moment's consideration, "for a belief that Foley was acquainted with some or all of the facts relating to my uncle's death. He—he had endeavoured to—to blackmail me on the strength of such an alleged knowledge. I treated him with contempt, and advised him to inform you of any secrets he had unearthed or was otherwise possessed of. But—on—reflection I decided to probe the matter—hence my visit. I may add, Mr. Brasher, that I share your chagrin at finding him as far from my demands as he is from your clutches."

Michael Brasher knitted his brows. "You speak frankly enough, Mr. Dering," he allowed, "but Foley is, as you see, dead, and I must accept your explanations, to a certain degree, on trust. However, if you will do the cause of law and order a service you might hurry to the police-station and ask the sergeant to send a constable and summon a doctor as quickly as possible; I dare not conclude too hastily that our friend here has shuffled off his mortal coil altogether. For the present, I will remain in charge myself."

Mr. Brasher's tone was stern and precise. Felix Dering regarded him for several seconds—a light in his eye which might almost have been that of suppressed amusement. But the Inspector's request was a practical command and he could serve no good purpose by demurring to it. Not that Felix had the slightest doubt of the sailor's decease—the clenched jaw, the glazed pupil, the awful inertia of the athletic figure, betrayed the unmistakable truth. With a cold assent, he passed out of the cottage, and, at a rapid pace, made for the small police dépôt hard by. Arrived there, he gave the necessary instructions, saw one constable start for the nearest physician, another for the sailor's cottage, and turned his own footsteps in the direction of the High Street.

The afternoon was growing late as he went along the quiet thoroughfare, an elasticity in his stride to which it had been a stranger for weeks. At the establishment of Caleb Forester he paused and entered. The old chemist was behind the counter; he murmured a nervous good-evening.

"Is Mr. Geddes about?" inquired Felix, meeting Caleb's gaze with a species of embarrassment; their previous encounter had been the occasion of the chemist's singular warning against Inspector Brasher.

"He's indoors, sir," said Caleb Forester; "I will mention that you wish to see him. The chemist leaned over the counter and lowered his voice. "I'm glad to have this opportunity of speaking to you, sir," came in a whisper, to Felix's ear; "about what I recently took the liberty of mentioning, sir. You recollect I confessed I wouldn't guarantee myself if I got a trifle foolish any time. I must have been indiscreet, as I

feared I might be, sir, for the other day Inspector Brasher tackled me on the very subject."

"And you replied——?" said Felix imperturbably. "Put him on a wrong scent," chuckled Caleb; "I have evidently been bragging, in my drunken pride, sir—for drunk I was, sir, to be such a fool—about having done you a service of some kind. I meant, of course, my holding my tongue about your being in Wyresdale the night of the squire's murder. But I fobbed Brasher off by saying I had recommended you to see *The Colleen Bawn*, at the Duchester Theatre (you remember I did mention it to you, sir), and that if I hadn't sent you there you mightn't have been able to prove an alibi."

Felix assented; he was seeking, in memory, to analyse Michael Brasher's grave and non-committal demeanour towards him.

"That satisfied B.," proceeded Caleb, "more especially as he was on a new trail. He has suspicions of my brother-in-law, Nick Foley, a sailor, and a queer character at the best, who lives near your lodge-gates. Nick's lost an arm and couldn't have been the one to do away with the squire. But Brasher is as obstinate as a mule. Why won't you get off while he gives you the chance, sir?"

Felix was pondering. "Nicholas Foley your brother-in-law!" he said; "why, yes, I recollect the name as that of your wife's family. Mr. Forester, I called at Foley's place a quarter of an hour ago—and—found him in a species of fit—or—worse. Brasher was there, he was the first to discover Foley ill—or dying. Perhaps you had better go round."

Caleb Forester gasped. "Dear, dear," he murmured; "Nick dying! I never liked him, sir, he was a reckless, tricky sort, but poor Margaret was fond of him. I'll go immediately. And so Brasher was there; how odd, how very odd!" He began to put on his hat and coat—they hung in a cupboard by the stairs that led out of the shop.

Felix Dering produced a tissue-paper parcel. "At your leisure, Mr. Forester," he intimated, "you might deliver this to Mr. Geddes; it is a magnifying-glass I borrowed. Tell him it has been of the greatest value to me."

He laid a hand on the old chemist's withered palm. "As for your advice to fly, Mr. Forester," he added; "you mean well, but you do not understand. I am innocent, and I shall stay in Wyresdale. Let Geddes have his glass and my message. Good-evening." And Felix took a cheerful departure.

The chemist looked after him as he completed his preparations to set out for the sailor's cottage: his decision was expressed in a doleful shake of the head. Ignorant of his ominous gesture, Felix Dering returned, at the same quick and confident pace, to Dering House.

He sprang up the flight of oaken stairs to his rooms, more buoyant and eager than he had been for a month. Suddenly a thin and piercing wail penetrated to him—a wail that shaped itself into a familiar word, the name of his tiny cousin, the lost child baronet.

"Brian! Brian!" it repeated, in a woman's piteous tones. The call echoed through the ghostly twilight of Dering House, and chilled the warm blood in Felix Dering's veins. He halted, irresolute.

While he stood in the dusky corridor a rustle of skirts stole down it: he faced about, to behold Judith Garland. At sight of him she frowned and bit her red lips.

"Lady Dering is hysterical beyond her wont," said Judith, icily; "I am sending for Dr. Vavasour. He will hear something worth hearing," she supplemented menacingly, "when he comes to visit his patient."

She caught Felix by the shoulder. "Listen," she bade him; "listen!" They waited in the brooding

shadows, Felix Dering and the woman whose love for him had turned to hate.

"Brian, Brian!" cried Lady Dering's mournful voice, penetrating the panels of an adjacent bed-chamber; "what have you done with him, Felix? Give me back my husband, Felix, give me back my child."

The scream faded among the corridors of the rambling mansion. Judith laughed.

"Your time is short, Felix Dering," she remarked; "you made an enemy of me or I would have helped you to conceal even this. As it is I might yet relent—we women are so susceptible to the penitence of those we—love."

Felix freed himself from her grasp. "You humiliate yourself in vain, Miss Garland," he said, scornfully.

Judith snarled, as a cat does in its anger. "Your fate be on your own head," she hissed; "and when you mount the scaffold for your uncle's murder, remember it is I who have sent you there."

The man she had threatened smiled. "Neither you nor anyone else will send me there," he said; "not only am I innocent, but I know the guilty."

A cry broke from Judith Garland's heaving bosom. "You know the guilty!" she whispered.

Felix brushed by into the gloom of the narrow passage. But his words floated back to her.

"I know, and when the time comes I will prove it."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH A DOOR CLOSSES.

"Give me a pick-up of some kind—I've managed to run against a headache of the worst sort. Raised it coming down here on a rotten Parliamentary because the express didn't serve."

The person who made this explanation was a well-dressed fellow of about thirty, with bold dark eyes and a restless mouth. Under his carefully-groomed exterior it would have been difficult to recognise the former shabby respectability of Neal Garland. Neal had, to all appearance, had a stroke of luck.

He leaned on the counter of the Wyresdale Pharmacy and studied the keen, reserved features of Archibald Geddes. The chemist's assistant had acknowledged the querulous order, and reaching to a measuring-glass, began to get down bottle after bottle, as he compounded deliberately the required stimulant.

A certain uneasiness was evident in the restless motions of his customer's feet and hands; though Neal plainly sought to disguise the close attention with which he favoured the Scotchman. When the glass was delivered to him, it was three-parts full of a crimson fluid.

"I say," observed Archibald Geddes' patient; "you mightn't guess it, but I have been referred to you for a little information. Not but what my headache's genuine. As for my name, it's Neal Garland."

"I hope," answered Geddes, rubbing his chin, "you'll not be disappointed, but I don't fancy I'm acquainted with you at all, Mr.—Mr. Garland."

"No," admitted the other, coolly, "but you were with an old pal of mine—a sailor called Foley. At least, so I gather from local gossip. I'm staying at the Wheatsheaf Hotel, where I find your boss consumes a good deal of useless breath and a large quantity of inferior whiskey. I understand, thanks to him, that you were in, so to speak, at Foley's queer death. How did it happen—a dog-bite, I am told."

"Humph!" said the Scotchman; "he was bitten, and badly, while visiting Wyresdale Park, where Mr. Hare, the owner, had given him permission to set a few snares. Some big mastiffs run loose in the park at night—a whim of Mr. Hare's. The result was Foley

came to me with a lacerated throat, which I bandaged, and advised him to call in a doctor. He asked me to get him a visit from Dr. Kraft, who lives at Wyresdale Park as a private friend of Mr. Hare's. Foley claimed a species of intimacy with him. He approved of my dressings, and prescribed a little anti-febrifuge."

"A little what!" exclaimed Neal, sharply. "Something to reduce the risk of fever," said the chemist's assistant—"Foley had malaria in his blood. Dr. Kraft had met him years before and was aware of the fact."

Neal Garland snapped his fingers abruptly—Archibald Geddes made a mental note of the gesture.

"When Dr. Kraft and I saw Foley," pursued Geddes, "he was settling to sleep, fit enough, and in the best of tempers. An hour or two later, Inspector Brasher—of the county police—called at Foley's cottage and found him dead."

The listener frowned. "What had Foley been doing to get the police on his track?" he demanded.

"Brasher said," responded the Scotchman, drily, "he had struck up an acquaintance with Foley, and was just paying a friendly visit."

Neal relinquished the delicate glass, depositing it on the counter. He discharged the small fee out of a fist full of small change.

"I heard," he added, "a whisper about your professional accuracy being attacked—the bottle of medicine, the anti-febrifuge."

"It was analysed," said the chemist's assistant, "and found correct. Dr. Kraft swallowed publicly half the contents of the bottle at the coroner's inquest. Foley died, according to Dr. Kraft, from 'spasm of the glottis,' no doubt induced by the bite. The Doctor agreed that my dressing had been most suitable. And now I have answered your questions, Mr. Garland, may I inquire if you were intimate with Foley or had only met him hazard."

The visitor abandoned his lounging position. "We were merely acquaintances," he returned; "I ran down to Wyresdale on other business and thought I should like to have a chat with the old shell-back. He was a bit of an oddity, you will allow. But it's of no importance, especially as he's gone under."

Lighting a cigarette, Neal Garland strolled out of the shop into the High Street. A fine rain was falling, and a stray leaf whirled down the pavement. August had yielded place to September—the early gloaming showed it.

Archibald Geddes put the coppers paid him into the till, and going behind the dispensing-screen, took from under the table a wooden box. Out of this he lifted a trap of wire; in it lay a mouse, stiff. The Scotchman contemplated the inert body, the wrinkles of deep thought chasing one another over his intelligent features.

A sound disturbed him and he peered round the polished mahogany. Michael Brasher stood at the counter. He caught sight of Geddes and went to the edge of the screen.

"Hullo," ejaculated the Inspector, taking in the probable significance of the article in Geddes' grasp; "troubled with mice?"

"Not over much," retorted the Scotchman; "I had a lot of bother to secure this—I wanted it for an experiment."

Brasher looked interestedly at the defunct rodent; Geddes stroked his full, strong jaw. Then he laid the mouse on a slab, opened it with a stroke of a scalpel, and examined the tiny viscera.

"That poor beast, Inspector," he said, "died from spasm of the glottis—have you ever heard the term before?"



Unexpectedly the portal behind him swung open, and he staggered in. . . . The Scotsman was a prisoner—the captive of unknown gaoilers.

Michael Brasher shot a glance at him. "The thing which killed Foley, wasn't it?" he responded.

"Quite so," assented Geddes; "you dropped in fortunately, Mr. Brasher; I have completed a difficult analysis. You recollect the medicine I put up for Foley. I diddled you a trifle over it—I represented that I touched it twice—once to compound it, once to give Foley a dose. Actually, I touched it a third time—the morning after he died—to abstract a sample."

The Inspector folded his arms and his face darkened. "I had been to the cottage the night previous," pursued Geddes, investigating (in my amateur fashion), Mr Brasher, and decided to make sure of my stuff. Early the next morning, and while the body was being prepared to lie at the Wheatsheaf, I nipped a sample. Ten drops of it on a piece of bacon killed a large rat—it died from spasm of the glottis."

"And half the whole bottle failed to kill Dr. Kraft," sneered the Inspector, "besides which, the mixture was analysed."

"Pshaw," said Geddes, "what I could do could be

done by others—the bottle had been refilled subsequently to my appropriating a dose or two, with a pure version of the original prescription. My sample was from the hocussed stuff. I cannot tell you what it was that killed Foley—not the name nor the nature of the drug, though I ascertained its presence. There was more than quinine and nux vomica in the portion I took; there was a minute quantity of what, concentrated, formed a white powder. That powder I administered to this mouse on a lump of cheese—as you see, it is dead."

"And by doing so," commented Mr. Brasher, "you have destroyed the single proof of your statement."

"Have I?" queried the chemist's assistant: "there was no proof in the pinch of white dust I gave the beast. Who could prove that I got my sample out of the original bottle, that I am not a malicious liar, that I have not invented the whole thing?" My researches, though suggestive, are fruitless, Inspector—hence I permit you to become a sharer in them."

"But why," began Michael Brasher, "investigate at all—what did you suspect?"

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Archibald Geddes clapped him on the shoulder. "Think, my dear Brasher!" he cried; "think—it is a police-officer's first duty. But what can I do for you—have you called on business or pleasure?"

"Well," owned the Inspector, "I did wish to have a few words with Mr. Forester."

Geddes indulged in a grimace. "Good," he responded, "and I want to go out, so I'll retire and send Mr. F. through to you."

"Thanks," said Michael Brasher; "but see here, Mr. Geddes, are you joking about that medicine of Foley's?"

The Scotchman laughed as he tossed the eviscerated mouse into the waste-bucket. "Never was more serious in my life," he declared; "I have told you all there is to tell. Think, my dear Brasher, think."

And, chuckling, he disappeared into the back-parlour. He routed Caleb Forester from his doze over a belated tea, and sent him to interview Michael Brasher. After which, he himself set out by the side door through the windy fall of the day. The twilight grew as he strode on—evening was not far off.

Near the wicket in the brick circuit of Wyresdale Park he paused to survey his surroundings. The inquest upon Foley had drawn attention to the overhanging bough by which Inspector Brasher had observed the sailor scale the wall; it had been cut away and nothing but the iron transverse of the wicket offered the slightest purchase to a would-be climber. Yet to enter the prohibited demesne beyond the stout barrier was evidently the object of Archibald Geddes.

Strong in arms and chest, he mounted as Foley had done when he had tracked Professor Kraft from the High Street and the chemist's shop. Drawing himself to the top bar of the gate, Geddes thrust himself outward and upward by a lever-like action of his knee, gained the parapet of the wall, and alighted inside.

From his pocket he drew a short instrument, which glittered, save where it ended in a rubber bulb. It was an ammonia-gun, with a nickel barrel. Geddes was protected by a simple and noiseless weapon from the canine guardians of the place.

As the sailor had done, he stole across the turf between the trees to the base of the rounded hill, on whose slopes there stood the structure now accepted by Wyresdale as the luxurious observatory of the Golden Dwarf.

Soon Archibald Geddes became aware, as he scouted to and fro about the structure, of a monotonous throbbing sound, like the persistent coughing of some huge animal. He listened to it as he made a cautious tour of the observatory.

A deep bark broke the stillness of the autumn dusk, and a great dog leapt out of the increasing gloom. The chemist's assistant levelled his gun and a spurt of ammonia blinded the brute in its spring. It grovelled, howling piteously; another of Otto Hare's ferocious mongrels rushed to its cry. A third and fourth came, barking as if possessed.

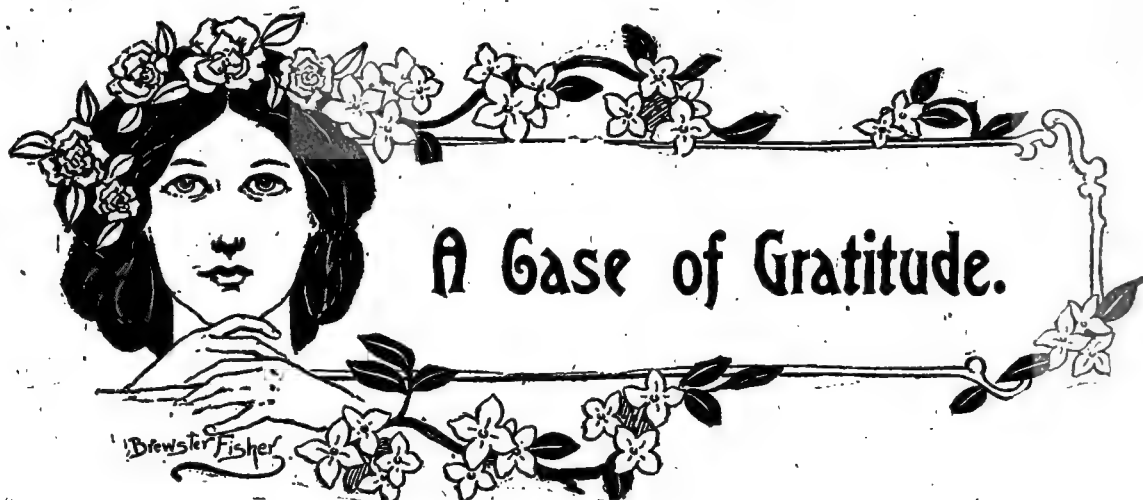
Archibald Geddes was forced back against the low door. He kept the brutes at bay with his ammonia-projector, but the charges were giving out.

Unexpectedly, the portal behind swung wide, he staggered in, to darkness and the determined grasp of some invisible rescuers. There was a hollow clang and the bellowing of the dogs waxed fainter; the door had shut. The Scotchman was a prisoner—the captive of unknown gaolers.

(To be continued.)

STAGE MANAGER MUGGS (startled by "star's" unceremonious exit): "Hogan! What on earth's struck yer?" Actor Hogan (as Hamlet): "E-g-g-s!"

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A Case of Gratitude.

JERROLD MANNING had reached the period in life when mankind in general granted him the privileges commonly accorded old age—a sufficient number of years having chased over his head to render it well nigh bald, while his teeth, the monuments of youth, had fallen out one by one, to be replaced by age's artist, the dentist! Yet withal he would have gasped with horror at the idea of his having entered his dotage, but when an old man is ever astride a new hobby, one name for childishness serves as well as another. He had within the past twelve months exhausted several such whimsical beasts—mounted and ridden them until he or the hobby had declared "Enough!"

First, he had money to humour his fancies; secondly, he was temperate and healthy, and lastly, not unattractive in face and figure, and was always elegantly dressed. He had now arrived at the mature, if not ripe, age of sixty, and had withstood the wiles, smiles and graces of scores of charming women with whom he had come in contact within the past forty years, and it had just dawned upon him that since there were no natural heirs to his estate he might derive considerable satisfaction from a free expenditure of a reasonable amount in philanthropy. The evening he had reached this conclusion he had dropped into a first-class theatre and was attracted by the singing of a mere slip of a girl. Her voice was untutored, but pathetically sweet and plaintive, yet without a suggestion of weariness. She sang from the heart, and each note seemed to touch a responsive chord in his nature as no song had ever done before, and long after the last note had ceased to vibrate, and the singer forgotten by the audience, Jerrold Manning sat dreaming.

Ah, here was the young nightingale with the clipped wings! Here was a voice that needed but slight cultivation to thrill the hypercritical world of music as it had thrilled him! Perhaps she was poor—folly, he knew she was poor—little brothers and sisters and a widowed mother clinging to her for support—these were the tones in her life that inspired the plaintive note in her voice! Was she pretty? He did not know, scarcely cared, but

he resolved to give her a helping hand, an honest fatherly hand, toward higher ideals, greater perfection and truer art.

A resolution on his part was easily shaped into action, and but a few days elapsed until he had ascertained the private name of the young singer, located her abode, and arranged an interview through a mutual acquaintance. Accordingly one afternoon he presented himself at the home of Miss Nellie Bridges, as the young lady was known. "You need not wait, Stuart," he had told his driver. "I'll take a car back," and the worthy old coachman had chuckled and immediately fallen into a reflective mood as to what "de guv'nor" was up to now! He had been in Mr. Manning's service for years, had seen him take home ragged urchins out of the street who were supposed to be "full of promise" and "out of their element," etc., and had known his master to spend days following up a case of cruelty to children or animals, until he was always prepared for anything, or, to use his own language, "was spectin' the most un'spected things."

Mr. Manning was somewhat fastidious, and the mixed scent of onions, cabbage, garlic and coffee that greeted his nostrils as he entered the tenement was hardly calculated to stimulate his theory of establishing higher ideals among the people he might find there! Mrs. Bridges was engaged in the praiseworthy, if not intellectual, occupation of washing, and after wiping the soapsuds from her big fat hands, came forward cordially, meanwhile using her apron to dispel the beads of perspiration that bedewed her brow.

"And so ye wishes to see Nellie, does ye? Well, sir, she'll be in presently," setting forward a chair, and again bringing the handy apron into utility as a dust-cloth.

"If yez can wait a bit, sorr, as she has just gone to the sthore on an errant, and sure seems to me she's gone plenty long!"

"I heard your daughter sing, Mrs. Bridges, and I feel deeply—"

"Sure, now, Nellie has a pretty voice, sir—ivery one does say the same, but she isn't me own daughter, you understand. Sure, Oi found her on the sthreet when

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she was but a baby, and niver, sir, to this day, have Oi learned where she did come from."

"Then she's alone in the world, and is——"

"No, sir, don't you be a-thinkin' of that—my Pat and Oi we loves Nellie, and though she sings loike an angel, she loves us, too—at least, we think she do," she added reflectively, "though yez can see, sir, she's a lady, and we are not of the gintry, to be sure."

To feel that his prospective *protegee* was not of this blood and bone, honest though it might be, proved no small relief to him, and he found his interest strengthening, and his heart unfolding with kindness and goodwill.

Presently a quick step was heard from adown the bare hallway, and a sweet young voice softly singing the second verse of DeKoven's masterpiece:

"O promise me that you will take my hand—
The most unworthy in this lonely land—
And let me sit beside you——"

She had reached the door, and, ceasing her song, she stopped, slightly confused, but with a dignity that was inborn, for certainly it was not the result of cultivation; then stood awaiting some form of introduction.

"Sure, Nellie, yez been a long time comin', and this gentleman here has been as patient as a lamb, and——"

"My name is Manning, and you are Miss Bridges, I believe," and the old gentleman gallantly rose and ended the embarrassing situation. Nellie acquiesced gracefully, seating herself and waiting expectantly. He was struck with the incongruity of her surroundings—here was the proverbial pearl cast before swine, kindly though they were—nevertheless swine, and his heart gave a throb of pity that nearly suffocated him, and it was some moments before he could lay before her his scheme for her deliverance, as he now regarded her rescue from sordid surroundings.

"Miss Bridges, as you see, I am an old man. Perhaps I'm fanatical, perhaps I'm foolish, but I am honest, and having heard you sing I became deeply interested in you, not only in you, but particularly am I concerned about your future—your voice, which I consider possesses one rare quality—that of fine feeling—and when blended with exquisite pathos renders it unusual in the extreme."

"You are very kind, sir, but I fear you overrate——"

"Not at all, my dear young lady," he used the term not flippantly, but naturally and seriously. "I have heard some music in my day, and, as I said before, I'm plain spoken, and will admit 'tis more your voice than your personality in which I am concerned, although the latter I find charming," he added simply. Then, as she ventured no response:

"I have means, and feel that in the interest of musical art you could be of much service should you accept at my hands the cultivation of your voice."

The offer was an unusual one, and so delicately had he clothed his charity in the habiliments of a request, a favour—a kindness on her part—that Nellie herself was puzzled for a definite conclusion regarding his object. As the prospect of possible culture of her voice dawned upon her—this, the dream of her life—her head had seemingly danced a jig of expectancy to the tune played by her throbbing heart!

Tender years and her ignorance of conventionalities in general perhaps saved her from the mortification which fear of a baser object would have inspired to the mind of one better versed in worldliness, yet to Nellie but one fear presented itself—that of her inability to meet his requirements or attain the height of perfection he

might assign to her. She was silent some moments, and Jerrold Manning studied her face thoughtfully. "A glorious opportunity for evolution, science, and art!" was his *resume* of her condition.

"I am grateful, sir, but I fear I would be a disappointment to you. I know so little of music I hardly see how I ever had the courage to sing for money; but some way people liked my voice, and so I have kept on because—well, we needed the money, Pat, Mammy, and I."

It was quite an hour before the old gentleman left the garlic-scented tenement; but when he did, a tear glistened in his usually merry eye, and his big heart was tenderly nursing the new offspring of human and philanthropic love!

* * * * *

Three years had passed—passed swiftly, happily, gloriously, for Nellie, in one of the fashionable finishing schools for young ladies—fashionable, hence well patronised and expensive, where she received special training in music, with a smattering of general information. She had been a bright, winsome, ambitious pupil, and her teachers, who occasionally had such cases with which to deal, asked no questions regarding her previous education, but endeavoured only to fit her as best they could, in so short a time, for a successful musical career. Nellie was keenly alive to this rare opportunity, and applied herself assiduously to every task, and at the end of three years had accomplished more than one of indifferent nature could have mastered in double that period.

Mr. Manning had called frequently, and on each occasion noted with a thrill of something akin to ecstasy the improvement in the voice of his *protegee*. Ah! here was a tone once lacking in power, now beautifully modulated, superbly full and mellow, yet retaining all its original sweetness, and again the dashing staccato movement, piquant and gay, with occasional little trills like the gurgle of a mountain stream, and so delicately executed that he marvelled at her simplicity and lack of self-consciousness, for here indeed was true genius.

She had ever greeted this more than friend without affectation, yet never disguising her almost tender regard for him. Once in trying, as she ever did, to thank him for his repeated kindness, she exclaimed:

"Ah, my dear friend, how can I ever repay you for all you have done? No father was ever kinder." And raising his hand to her lips, she imprinted a kiss, while tears of gratitude filled her eyes.

"Do not speak of repaying me, Nellie. All I ask is that your name be spotless, and your songs heard by the whole world, and that in listening it may know that your voice is no less true than your life. Then I'll be repaid!"

But the days of study were over now, and Jerrold Manning was preparing for her professional *debut*, sparing neither pains nor money. Dreading lest her association with poor old Mrs. Bridges and Pat might contaminate her, or at least lessen her opportunities for a successful opening into the musical world, he had found temporary lodging for her with a widowed friend, who supplied in refinement what she lacked in wealth.

Riches, discreetly exhibited and distributed, are the magic words that open the treasure caskets of the all-desirable patronage of good society and professional deference. Nellie's *debut* was a success. Jerrold Manning's *protegee* (others said ward), from no one knew where, was to come out professionally. She was beautiful

and a romantic, not-to-be-unearthed side of her life was referred to quite cunningly by the press, until all the city—at least the most desirable element—were agog over the affair. The house was packed to suffocation, the boxes were full of faultlessly attired men and beautiful women—as much of the latter being apparent as the semi-operative occasion would warrant! Artificial perfumes, intermingled with those of rare orchids, and roses were wafted across the house, to be fanned again by the sweep of glittering fans held by jewelled hands.

There was a polite hush, and Nellie, arrayed in virgin white, came forth confidently and reassuringly. Jerrold Manning, watching her from his box, caught his breath as he looked at her—surely, just to see her like that was worth all the paltry sum he had spent in her behalf! He caught his breath again—she had begun to sing. 'Twas the mad song from *Lucrezia Borgia*, and as she touched each note with precision and grace, on through the difficult passages where dramatic force imbued each word, his pride was boundless. She ceased, and a perfect shower of flowers lay at her feet, and gracefully raising a large bouquet of roses from the floor, she sang a dainty little *aria* as an *encore*, that again showed the beauty of her voice, though in a lighter vein.

The programme was done, but the audience, now her friends, so responsive is humanity when sent to meet the nature of a trusting, winsome, and talented woman—yet clamoured for one more number, and she, in the midst of her triumph, remembered an incident of long ago, passed a word to her leader, and began singing her old-time favourite, "Oh, Promise Me." Jerrold Manning listened as he had never listened before to earthly song, and as she reached the words, "Oh, promise me that you will take my hand," there was a beating as of unseen handson his breast, he clutched the railing for a moment, rose, donned hat and top coat, and left the theatre.

Cupid's ways are mysterious; but at sixty he had met his fate—he was in love!

All night in smoking jacket and slippers he had paced his chamber, again and again, but this last and crowning emotion of his soul, which naught before had stirred, refused to be subdued. He thought of honour—was this honour to ask a young woman, overwhelmed with gratitude, as he knew she was, to give her young heart into an old man's keeping! Bah! He was dreaming! Then hope whispered of the advantages to her of foreign travel—ah yes!—she couldn't go alone—she needed his protection! So he had at last yielded to the sweet temptation, and in the morning, at scarcely a conventional hour, presented himself before her. He seemed to see her anew—but how could he hope? He plunged boldly into the subject—unbosomed his heart, pictured the years of study abroad, wealth—and all he asked in return was her esteem, comradeship, friendship! She listened; duty, gratitude and respect arranged themselves on one side, and on the other, a new found love, the love of one she had for years previous deemed too exalted in the social world for her to dare confess, even to herself, the love she bore him; and now, through her old friend's benevolence, when she had reached a higher plane in life, she had been sought and wooed by her idol. Oh! unspeakable joy!—but must she cast aside this bliss, as yet scarcely realised—all for duty's sake? Yet did she not owe Jerrold Manning everything—more than she could ever repay? Her formal acceptance of Horace Maddox had not yet been given—cruel fate that it had not! She

struggled as with a mighty foe—fought the battle of stern duty *versus* love, hope, bliss—to her womanly nature it was life itself—still her answer to Jerrold Manning was bravely spoken.

"You are the best friend I ever had, and the esteem respect, and honour you ask is yours, and more; and if my hand in marriage will repay the debt I owe, 'tis yours!"

The old man gazed long and lovingly, even solemnly, into the pretty downcast face.

"I do not want your gratitude, Nellie only the opportunity to make you happy;" and with the old-time courtesy and deference, but with his heart aflame, he stooped and kissed her trembling hands.

'Tis said that joy seldom kills, but it may produce perfect oblivion; and this was true in the case of Jerrold Manning, as he briskly walked back to his apartments that eventful morning.

Someone thrust a friendly hand through his arm, and then he heard a cheery voice:

"How are you, Manning—seem awfully absorbed!"

"Why, hello, Maddox! Yes, was rather busy with my own thoughts. Have——"

"Dreaming over Miss Nellie's success last night, eh? Well, that's pardonable, I'm sure. Simply magnificent, wasn't she? Not a bobble in her work—perfect, in fact. But now that I have a chance, I'll just speak to you on a very important matter, which in honour I think you should know. You see—that is, Mr. Manning, I want to marry Nellie, and, as her father by adoption, I want your consent. I love her—have for years—and know she reciprocates. Truth is, I asked her last night, but, womanlike, she is weighing her decision."

"I—oh—call a hack, Maddox. Vertigo, you know," as he was assisted into the carriage. "See you again about that little matter!"

A few hours later a note was handed Nellie, addressed in his familiar chirography, which read:

"MY DEAR LITTLE GIRL,—'Twas but an old man's folly—an old man's dream—from which I have awakened, and I cannot accept such a sacrifice. The greatest happiness you can bestow on me is your hand in marriage with Horace Maddox."

"Forget my idle, foolish words, and let me still and always be simply your father."

"JERROLD MANNING."

"Do you love me?" she asked fondly. "Dearly," replied he. "Would you die for me?" "No, my precious one. Mine is an undying love." She had to make the best of this.

AUNT DOROTHY: "How many commandments are there, Johnny?" Johnny (glibly): "Ten." Aunt Dorothy: "And now suppose you were to break one of them?" Johnny (tentatively): "Then there'd be nine."

MRS. HINGSO awoke suddenly. "John!" "Whado-you want?" sleepily. "There's burglars in the house." "Let 'em burgle." "You're a coward. They'll steal all the silver." "Um-um." "They'll take my jewels." "All right." Silence for a moment. "John." "Can't you let me sleep?" "They aren't in the dining-room," in an awful voice; "they are in the cellar, stealing the wine——" "What!" leaping out of bed. "The scoundrels! Where's my revolver?"

A BILL OF ACCEPTANCE.

ARTHUR SEYMOUR sat down heavily in a chair and groaned. He had risen from his bed and begun to dress himself with the feeling that something was wrong; he had only half dressed when his efforts to discover the cause of this feeling were successful, and the memory of the events of the preceding night came back with a rush.

What demon had tempted him to play at cards with that fellow, Captain Vicars? He knew that the man had a reputation for always winning! But he had been fool enough to try his luck—goaded, probably, by the thought that he might in that way do something to retrieve his losses on the race yesterday afternoon—and he had lost £2,500.

Truly, his plight was a sorry one. It was useless to say hard things about his luck; he owed just £4,000 now to the bookmaker and Captain Vicars, and it must be paid by the morrow. How was it to be done?

He could not apply to his sole relative and guardian, Sir Henry Seymour; the old gentleman was down upon extravagance, and would not advance a penny beyond

the allowance which he had apportioned to his ward. Moreover, the sum was such a big one, that did the mere fact come to the old man's knowledge, Arthur would lose all chance of inheriting the fortune that lay snugly in the bank in the name of the old knight.

Well, sitting in the chair would not mend matters; he must be up and doing, or good-bye to future prosperity. He completed his toilet, and, after a scanty breakfast, went out to his club.

It was nearly twelve o'clock, he remembered, so that he was almost certain to find Jack Granger there. Jack was a man of expedients, and might be able to suggest some way out of the mess.

"He'll be very clever if he does," murmured Arthur despondently, "for the hole I've got myself into is a pretty big one; but I must try him."

He had been walking along without noticing where he was going. A cry for help near at hand aroused him, and he looked about him wonderingly. Where on earth had he strayed? He had turned a wrong corner,



He was soon lying groaning in the gutter.

£1 a week for six months. See the great offer in this week's **BIG BUDGET**, 1d.

seemingly, for he could not recognise the locality. He was in some narrow bye-street. But had he not heard a cry for help? Of course, and it had seemed to come from the corner.

He ran to the corner—only a few yards—and looked down the next street; there was a drunken rough trying to embrace the slight figure of a girl.

Not a bad-looking girl, either, thought Arthur, as he rushed to the rescue. Her face was distinctly pretty, although rather distorted by indignation and fear.

The rough was a burly fellow, but in his condition he was no match for the trained young athlete, and he was soon lying groaning in the gutter. Then Arthur turned to the still panting girl and asked her if she were hurt.

"No, thank you," she jerked out, her face becoming still more highly coloured with shame. "I came this way to get my errand done more quickly, and he set upon me and tried to—"

"Well, he won't be able to steal a kiss from anyone else this morning," remarked Arthur, surveying the form of the brute.

"He didn't kiss me. I prevented him," cried the girl indignantly. "But," she added more gently, "I owe you many thanks for your timely assistance. I am afraid I cannot show my gratitude in any more useful manner."

"Oh, that's all right!" returned the young man lightly. "Shall I accompany you to more civilised regions?"

"No, thank you," answered the girl with a slight flush on the cheeks that were now cooling. "I shall be all right now."

And with a bow and a grateful look, shyly given, she was gone.

"Now," mused Arthur, as he strode down the street in an endeavour to locate his position, "if this were a tale she would turn out to be the daughter of a millionaire, who, in return for my services, would lend me—or give me—£5,000 to set me on my legs again. But she isn't, so I must find Granger."

He did find Granger, and that gentleman looked blank when he heard of his friend's predicament.

"I'd lend it to you myself like a shot, my boy, if I could; but it's too large an order. Besides, I'm hard up myself, for I've just had to meet a loan and pay over £500 to old Smiley. I wonder where he got that name? It fits him, for he always has a grin on his face, which is more than can be said for his clients."

An idea flashed across Arthur's brain. He was ready to grasp at any straw.

"A bill!" he cried eagerly. "Couldn't I get old Smiley to advance the money—for a time?"

"Not on your own hand only," observed Granger drily. "Smiley isn't so simple as that. He knows very well that Sir Henry is not bound to leave his money to you—that you may lose it if you kick over the traces. It's his business to know that sort of thing, you see. Besides, you couldn't borrow the money indefinitely, and you don't know for certain when the inevitable will happen."

"I didn't mean that, exactly," returned Arthur shamefacedly. "My idea was to get a loan for a time. I might be able to tide over this mess in a few months."

"You'll have to try someone else, then, for you won't be able to do business with that old gentleman unless you can get your bill backed by a substantial person."

A long pause ensued. It was broken by a question from Granger.

"Can't you think of anyone who would oblige you?" he asked. "It is rather a heavy responsibility, but something might turn up in six months, you know. But it would cost you an awful lot for interest."

"I don't care what it would cost for interest or anything else, so long as I can tide over this trouble. In six months I might be able to pay it off, and the old gentleman would never hear of it. At the worst, I believe he would pay the money to save the family name, but my allowance and prospects would go, and he would take care to let it be known that he was not to be held responsible for my doings."

"Then you had better try to find someone willing to chance it. It will give you a respite for half a year, and that's a consideration. I would go to old Smiley and arrange the best terms for you. He knows me."

Another pause; then Seymour spoke slowly.

"I once did a good turn for Guy Stanton. I hear that his father has made a pile of money over stocks and company promotion, and that Guy is pretty flush. I wonder if he would risk it and back a bill for me?"

"It's worth trying, anyhow," returned Granger. "You can't afford to let any opportunity slip. I'll tell you how to get the right side of him—flatter him about his cricket playing. The beggar isn't half bad with the bat, but he is no good at all with the ball; and he has a suspicion that people don't think much of his performances at bowling. So you flatter him generally on his playing, and particularly on his batting. That and a discreet reference to the good turn you did him at college ought to work the oracle. In the meantime I'll work the thing with Smiley on the chance."

With this understanding they separated, Granger betaking himself to the money lenders' office, and Seymour starting off for Lord's, where he thought it likely that he should find Stanton among the spectators.

After a little searching his expectations were realised. He found his former friend much disgusted at the poor show made by one of the elevens, and Arthur, though he felt hot at the part he was playing, ludicrously led the conversation into the right groove. They left the ground, and went to a refreshment room, where, after having talked Stanton into a suitable frame of mind, Arthur broached the subject of the loan.

Stanton was not a business man—his father was disappointed at his lack of commercial acumen—but he looked grave at the suggestion that he should become responsible for such a sum of money.

"But, I say," he objected, "suppose you couldn't meet it at maturity? How then? That would be rough on me, and the governor would rave—and he might refuse to pay. He's pretty 'cute.'"

"Oh, I don't think you need worry about that," replied Arthur, in agony at the idea that Stanton would decline. "It's certain to be all right." In his own mind he was not at all certain, and he hated himself for trying to deceive the young cricketer, but he was desperate. A respite for six months must be obtained at any cost.

After a little further demur, Stanton agreed, and it was arranged that they should meet at noon on the following day at the office of Mr. Smiley to complete the transaction. Seymour went off to find his friend Granger in order to settle preliminaries.

The next morning Seymour and Granger went to the moneylender's office just before twelve o'clock. The

outer door was opened by a young woman, Mr. Smiley's general clerk and secretary, who ushered them into a small waiting-room, with the intimation that they would have a minute or so, as Mr. Smiley was engaged, and they were a little before their time. Mr. Stanton had not arrived, she said in answer to Granger's inquiry.

"That's one of Smiley's little dodges, having a girl in the office; she is cheaper than a man would be, and he thinks that she is more attractive. Did you notice her?"

"No," was Arthur's reply. He was too preoccupied to notice anything. Perhaps Stanton might not turn up, after all.

"You ought to have gone for him and brought him here," was Granger's comment when Seymour gave expression to his fears. "Your game is up if he doesn't come. Perhaps he remembered that the interest was not included in the 4,000. That makes 1,600 more. Forty per cent.; it's stiff, but Smiley wouldn't do any better, and you wouldn't get it anywhere else."

"If he doesn't turn up I must say good-bye to Sir Henry's money and my present allowance. As it is, I may lose it, for, honestly, I don't see where the money is to come from in six months. If that bill matures and I don't meet it—"

"Hush!" warned the other. "This door is open, and the girl may hear. I don't think she has caught any of our talk, and I think she's right. But I must go and tell her that I don't want Stanton to see me."

He went out and had a moment's talk with the clerk, whom he had seen before. Then he returned to the waiting-room, while she answered her employer's bell and showed the other client out.

A minute later Seymour was ushered into the money-lender's private room by the lady clerk, Granger remaining in the waiting-room. Had Seymour been less preoccupied, he would have perceived that the girl kept her face averted as much as possible.

Shortly afterwards the outer bell rang, and Miss Allen ushered Stanton into the private room.

Mr. Smiley was all smiles. He felt that, though there was some risk, the chances of a good stroke of business were preponderant. Having once got hold of young Stanton, although in an indirect manner, he might be able to get him into the clutches into which, so many young men had been inveigled. Smiley was not the man to stop short of anything that would bring money into his coffers—that is, except crime of too flagrant a nature. He was very careful to keep out of reach of the long arm of the law, but he went dangerously near it at times.

At Granger's suggestion the bill had been drawn already. Smiley fussed about, handing each of the two men a pen and pointing out where they had to sign. He kept his hand partly over the bill, so that they could not see the amount properly, and each signed it without knowing that it was for £5,800. Smiley had put a little on the amount to cover possible expenses. Stanton had the figure of £4,000 in his mind, and did not dream that he was backing the bill for more than that sum.

Arthur stifled a sigh of relief as he took the bank-notes. The moneylender tried to begin a conversation with Stanton, whom he regarded as a probable pigeon to be plucked; but that young man was not in a humour for a conversation. He was angry with himself for having agreed to do this for Arthur; and—although not a keen observer—he took a dislike to the smiling individual who had placed that bill so carefully in his safe. He did not even wait for Seymour, but, bidding both

him and the money-lender a hasty good-day, he went out abruptly.

Time went on. At first Arthur thought very little of the loan. Six months is a long time to look forward to, and youth is always hopeful. The immediate danger had been averted, and that was sufficient.

Four months passed, and Seymour began to think that he must be doing something. His Micawber-like policy of waiting for something to turn up was not a success. On the day when he arrived at this conclusion, he heard a disagreeable piece of news. The desire for money had blunted the business acuteness of the elder Stanton, and a slump on the market had ruined him, or practically so. This would make Smiley inexorable in the matter of the bill; there was no earthly chance of grace or renewal on payment of the interest.

But the more Seymour thought over the affair, the more hopeless it appeared. Day after day he racked his brain for some way out, but nothing feasible came to his mind. He became haggard and ill, and even Granger's gaiety could not dispel the clouds. He tried gambling again on a small scale, but he was careful not to go too far. At the end of six weeks, however, he had not advanced his position in the least. In ten days more the bill would become due.

Granger and he had a long talk, the upshot of which was that they decided to pay a visit to Mr. Smiley and endeavour to effect a compromise. It was "dealing in futures," but it was the only chance.

Mr. Smiley received them very affably, but as soon as they stated their request he politely, but very firmly, declined to accede to it. It might be a good stroke of business to agree to postpone the presentation of the bill until the death of Sir Henry, who was an old man and not in the best state of health, but there was an equal chance of the transaction resulting in a bad debt. Sir Henry might live a long time—he took good care of himself—and he was just a little eccentric; he might leave the bulk of his money to some exploration fund, for he was an antiquarian. If the bill were presented at maturity, there was no doubt that Sir Henry Seymour would pay it, and it did not matter in the least to Smiley what the consequences would be for Arthur. No, Smiley was not to be got at; he was in a bad temper, having made some serious bad debts during the past three months, and having been very much worsted in a lawsuit only the day before.

The moneylender went to his safe, unlocked it with a key which he always kept on a bunch that passed into no other hands, and drew forth a paper from one of a set of miniature pigeon-holes.

"It is due on the 21st of this month, and the amount is £5,800," he said, reading from the bill as though he did not know the facts by heart.

"Six hundred," corrected Seymour and Granger simultaneously.

"Eight hundred," repeated Smiley drily.

"But that's wrong," declared Granger stoutly. "The arrangement was forty per cent. and that—"

"I cannot spare time to argue the point," returned Smiley resolutely. "This is the bill, duly signed, and it is for the amount I have stated."

"You old thief!" cried Granger, rising angrily.

The moneylender had just deposited the bill in the pigeon-hole marked "S" when this remark was made. He slammed the door of the safe in an outburst of rage, and shouted to them to leave his office.



The money-lender had quite lost his temper. He followed them along the passage and half-way down the stairs.

"Oh, we'll go," said Granger, more coolly. He opened the baize-covered door and walked into the general office, followed by Arthur, who was too dazed to utter a word.

"And if you are not here on the proper date to meet that bill," screamed Smiley, quite beside himself, and forgetting the presence of Miss Allen and everything else, "I'll send a note to Sir Henry Seymour for payment."

The moneylender had quite lost his temper. He followed them along the passage and halfway down the stairs (his office was on the first floor) muttering angrily. The slamming of the inner hall door informed him that his insulting visitor had departed, and he made his way slowly back to his own room.

Miss Allen was standing near the baize-covered door, which was shut. She looked frightened.

He pushed past her, entered the room, and flung himself into the chair at the table. Then he felt in his pocket for his keys, in order to open a drawer in the table, and, not finding them, turned mechanically to the safe at his back and took them from the lock where they were hanging. But he could not work; he was too much annoyed. He grasped his hat and coat savagely and strode out of the office, putting on his coat as he went.

That night Arthur Seymour fell ill of brain fever, and became powerless to do anything against the fate that was hanging over him.

Jack Granger was continually at his friend's bedside, listening to his ravings, of which the bill formed the most important part. Granger was inclined to heap maledictions on his own head for suggesting the loan from Smiley. It was not his fault that Arthur had got into the original trouble, and he had acted in Seymour's interests; but this reflection brought him little consolation. If he could only help Arthur!

Sir Henry Seymour was in India—he usually spent the winter in India—or Granger would have gone straight to him and pleaded for his friend, although the probability of being able to melt the old man's heart would have been small. His absence would entail a little waiting on Smiley's part, but the effect on Arthur's prospects would be exactly the same. Granger even thought of going to the moneylender and eating humble pie; but gave up the notion as futile.

He was seated by Arthur's bed two days later, when the patient's manservant entered softly, and said that a young lady was asking to see Mr. Seymour or Mr.

Granger on very urgent business. Wondering who it could be, he went into an adjoining room and found Miss Allen waiting.

"I hope you will excuse me," she began nervously. "I hear that Mr. Seymour is very ill."

"He is," rejoined Granger gravely. "I am afraid that he cannot attend to the matter of that bill just now. I suppose that's what you have come about. But it isn't due yet."

"I have come about the bill," said Miss Allen hesitatingly; "but I have not come on Mr. Smiley's account."

"Sit down," requested the surprised Granger. "What is it all about?"

"I overheard some of your conversation nearly six months ago," continued the girl, taking the proffered seat, "and I have learnt enough since then to convince me that Mr. Seymour cannot meet his liability, and that he will be ruined if he does not meet it." She stopped abruptly.

Granger nodded. What was the meaning of it?

"Mr. Seymour rendered me timely assistance once, when I was attacked by a ruffian. I don't think he knew me again, but I recognised him."

"Ah, indeed!" That was all he could say.

"I owe him a debt of gratitude, and I have come to pay it. Smiley cannot demand payment unless he produces the bill. Here it is."

And she handed him the paper. He looked at it in utter bewilderment; then the full force of possession flashed upon him, and he emitted a joyful whistle.

"That's the ticket, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "We'll hold it, and the old rascal is done."

"Oh!" cried Miss Allen, in dismay. "Oh! I forgot! You must not keep it—that would be robbery. I only thought of keeping it out of the way till Mr. Seymour was better and able to pay. Oh, give it me back! I shall be a thief!"

"No, you won't. We shall not rob him—only keep it safe till my friend is able to pay. It will serve the old scoundrel right for defrauding Seymour out of £200. Here, you may hold it yourself, to make sure. But how did you get it?"

"When you both came to him and Mr. Smiley got out of temper, and spoke of telling Sir Henry Seymour, I knew what was meant. I was seized with a mad desire to help your friend in return for what he had done for me. I saw the keys hanging in the safe lock. A thought seized me. While he was following you I ran into the room, pulled open the door of the safe and took out the bill. I had just time to stuff it in my dress pocket and get into my own office when he came back. But, oh dear! what have I done? I can't go back to him. I feel like a traitor—and I hate the place. I had to take it, because I was in great straits, and couldn't get another situation." And the girl, quite unstrung, burst into tears.

Granger soothed her, and told her to go home and fear nothing, as he would get her a situation. But she must say nothing about the bill.

Granger sat down and gave himself up to thought. The game was in his hands now, and he must work out the best way to play it. That did not take him long, and he went back to Arthur's room in a happier frame of mind.

On the morning of the day on which the bill was due, Granger went to Smiley's office and said he had come to meet it. His friend was too ill to attend to the matter, and he had come with his own cheque to liquidate the liability. Smiley sneered, and said he should require proof that the cheque would be honoured before he parted with his security, to which Granger answered that they would walk round to the bank together and there make the exchange.

There could be no objection to this course, so Smiley went to the safe—and found the pigeon-hole empty!

With an angry exclamation he said that he must have mixed it with some other papers. Granger agreed to wait while he searched for it, but the document was nowhere to be found.

The perspiration stood on the moneylender's brow. Where was it? No one but he ever had the key of the safe. He turned to Granger and said that as he was unable to find the paper just then, he would give him a receipt in full, and forward the bill when found. But to this Granger demurred.

"How do I know whether you have parted with it to someone else, and are not trying to swindle me?" he asked. "No; let me know when the paper is found, and you shall have the cash."

But the bill was not to be found. Smiley made one or two applications for payment, the response to which was that it would be better to wait a little longer. Seymour recovered, his recovery being accelerated by the information that Smiley had agreed to wait. The two friends went abroad, leaving Miss Allen in a good post in the City; and thus the matter rested for greater part of a year.

Then came the sudden death of Sir Henry Seymour. Arthur hated himself whenever he remembered that he had speculated on the old man's death. The whole business was a thing to be ashamed of, and it was a lesson that lasted him a lifetime.

It was then that he agreed to accept Smiley's receipt in full, as the security could not be found. When Granger showed this receipt to Miss Allen, she handed over the bill, which was destroyed.

Seymour rewarded Stanton—now in rather needy circumstances—for his timely assistance. There was another person who had helped him, and, according to the latest rumours, her reward will soon follow. But both of them take care to let the old matter slumber; it is not pleasant to recall it.



Short Stories That Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, September 9th. Post-cards only, please. The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mr. W. M. Barlow, Spring Bank, Cheadle, Staffs., whose contribution is denoted by a star.*

"HALLO, sir! How is it I catch you kissing my daughter?" "By sneaking in upon us, sir!"

"THIS is a hard world," murmured the young man. "Yes," replied she. "One doesn't realise how hard it is till one falls off a bicycle once or twice a week."

A SHORT time ago a publisher brought out a book entitled, "Advice to Plain Women." Only one copy has yet been disposed of, and that was taken by the office boy to his mother for curl-paper.

HEWITT: "I had a nightmare the last time I was at an hotel." Jewitt: "What of it?" Hewitt: "I foolishly mentioned it to the clerk the next morning and he charged me for the use of one horse."

"LOOK here," he said indignantly to the man with the hungry cow, "don't you see that 'keep off the grass' sign?" "Yes." "Well, yer cow's on the grass." "I know it, mister," was the placid answer, "I know jest as well as you do. You see, that cow can't read."

It was evident the moment she entered the room that he was angry. "What do you mean by suing me for breach of promise?" he demanded. "I never proposed to you in my life." "Why, of course you didn't," she answered in a conciliatory tone. "And I wouldn't have accepted you if you had. But you know I am going on the stage, and I must make some preparation."

THERE are some people who cannot keep a servant for more than a month, and Mrs. Myldue is one of them. She is in constant communication with the registry office. One morning Mrs. Myldue found herself without assistance in the house, the new maid not having arrived. She answered a knock at the door and found the butcher's boy, with the meat. Imagine her feelings when the youth gave vent to a prolonged whistle, and ejaculated: "What! Another fresh un! You won't stay long here, I'll bet. She's a rum un, she is."

* A MOST amusing slip was made the other day by an attorney at the Stafford Court, who was retained to defend a farmer whom a late servant-man sued for wages alleged to be owing to him by defendant, who refused to pay on account of the said servant leaving his employ without proper notice. The attorney wound up a grandiloquent speech by informing his worship that the plaintiff had left his client in a fix by absenting himself from his duties when there were forty-one cows to milk, thus requiring "all hands to the pump." At this announcement the risibility of the spectators was infectious, the court itself being unable to repress a good laugh. As the attorney resumed his seat the fact dawned upon him that to all intents and purposes he had perpetrated an egregious blunder.

GLADYS: "So Charlie has at last popped the question, eh?" Gwendolin: "'Popped' is hardly the word. I had to draw it out."

"WHY don't you wear all-wool underwear?" "My dear sir, no man can afford to wear all-wool underwear unless he has five sons growing up."

YOUNG MOTHER: "Horrors! Here's an account in the paper of a woman who sold her baby for tenpence." Young Farmer (wearily): "Perhaps it was teething."

"THE most wonderful thing about a baby," says a cynic, "is his ability to refrain from blushing when his mother is in his presence, and describes his good points to his visitors."

NEIGHBOB: "It is very kind of you to take an interest in my daughter." Gotrox: "Such was not my purpose." Neighbob: "What was your purpose?" Gotrox: "To take her entirely."

"DEAR," said the poet's wife, noticing his abstracted look, "you are worried about something." "Yes," he ejaculated. "Tell me, what have you on your mind?" "Nothing. That's what worries me."

SHE: "I hope you won't stop coming to see us, Mr. Tendertop." He: "Oh, thank you, Miss Mabel!" She: "Because ma says your cigarettes are killing the insects on the plants. A call or two more and the job will be done!"

THE sufferer slowly raised his eyelids. "Where am I?" he asked. "You were run into by another cyclist," answered the nurse. Later, as he was about to breathe his last, he asked in a touching manner: "What make was his machine?"

VISITOR: "Is your father at home?" Little Daughter: "What is your name, please?" Visitor: "Just tell him it is his old friend, Bill Johnson." Little Daughter: "Then he isn't in. I heard him tell mamma if any bills came he wasn't at home."

MRS. SMITHERS: "What an elegant gown Mrs. Bilson has! I do believe I never saw anything lovelier. There she goes now; isn't it a perfect dream? I—" Mrs. Smashum: "Hush, that's a ready-made." "Dear me, but my eyes do trouble me so; of course it is; beastly, isn't it?"

"MAMMA," said small Willie, "when sister Mary had the toothache you took her to the dentist and had it filled, didn't you?" "Yes, Willie," she replied. "Well," continued the little diplomat, "I've got the stomach-ache; don't you think you had better take me to the sweet-shop and get it filled?"

"COME right in the kitchen, Tommy," said Mrs. Brown, "and get your supper. Don't make the least noise, and as soon as you are through you must go right upstairs to bed." "What's the matter, ma?" cried little Tommy, putting his finger in his eye. "Hush, dear," she replied. "Your father has been hanging pictures this afternoon."

A CERTAIN wild beast tamer has a tartar of a wife. The other day, as the result of a violent quarrel, she gave him a generous hiding, and the poor fellow, at his wits' end, took refuge in the lions' den. Judge of the amusement of the spectators to behold the exasperated wife standing in front of the cage, brandishing a huge umbrella, and shrieking through the bars at regular intervals, "Come out of that, you big coward!—come out of that!"

CATARRH OF THE EARS A CAUSE OF DEAFNESS.

It is a well recognised fact that catarrhal diseases of the middle ear are the cause of the majority of cases of deafness. This in itself is unfortunate, because so many people, even of the present day, have little more than a dim idea of what constitutes a catarrhal ailment, and so neglect treatment until the pathological changes have attacked the deeply-seated structures, and the disease becomes chronic and complicated.

Briefly stated, catarrh is an inflammation of a mucous membrane, and may therefore affect any cavity of the body lined by such membrane. When this inflammation attacks the middle ear it causes swelling of the membranes, with consequent pressure upon all of the delicate structures which it covers. The tympanum or ear drum becomes thickened; the swelling interferes with the movements of the minute chain of bones which convey the impressions of wave sounds from the tympanum to the auditory nerve, and the sense of hearing becomes less and less acute in proportion as the thickening of the membrane increases with the advance of the pathological catarrhal changes.

The history of the treatment of catarrhal deafness shows a great want of success, which at first glance seems remarkable in face of the advance in the knowledge of the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the ear. But on further consideration it will be noted that almost the only resources of specialists were the ingenious instruments used in their attempts to treat deafness by forcing vapours and medicaments into the middle ear through the Eustachian tube, which can only be reached by way of the nose and throat. Decided success was not known until about twelve years ago, when Dr. Drouet began a series of experiments intended to demonstrate the possibility of conveying medicaments to the membrane of the middle ear by utilising the absorbent properties of the skin.

So great, indeed, has been the success of the Drouet specialised treatment that the entire August number of the *Journal for the Deaf* is devoted to a description of about two hundred cases cured by this process of medicating the middle ear. Those of our readers who are interested in the subject can obtain a free copy of this publication by addressing the Secretary, 72 Regent's Park Road, London, N.W.

We have permission to publish a few of the most recent cures. The case of Mrs. I. R. Maynard is an instance of catarrh of the middle ear uncomplicated by any suppurative conditions. Mrs. Maynard submitted her ailment for treatment by correspondence with the consulting physician of the Drouet Institute, reporting that deafness had affected both her ears for several years, and that of late it had grown much worse. In fact, the hearing was so bad that she could not hear a watch tick unless it was pressed close against the ear on each side. There were occasional noises in the ears like the ringing of bells. Mrs. Maynard previously had treatment by an aural specialist without benefit.

Appropriate treatment for catarrh of the middle ear and tinnitus, according to the Drouet Method, was prescribed and begun April 4th, 1901, with the result that in a few weeks' time Mrs. Maynard described herself as having recovered her hearing, and later, in response to an inquiry from the Institute as to whether the cure was complete, she wrote:

Melville House, Alfred Place,

Worthing, July 8th, 1901.

I have the greatest pleasure in writing to tell you of my complete recovery from deafness. About the middle of April I placed myself under your treatment, and after twenty days' treatment I was completely cured.

I was very deaf, could not hear the ticking of a watch, except when pressed close to my ear, but can now hear it from any part of the room in which I am sitting. I have not had any return of the deafness, but should I have

any relapse (which I think unlikely) I shall certainly write to you again.

Thanking you very much for the great good you have done me.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

I. R. MAYNARD.

The case of Miss M. Gregson is an instance of chronic catarrh of the middle ear, complicated by discharges from the ears. In the latter part of May Miss Gregson obtained from the Drouet Institute a Patient's Report Form, which she filled up with particulars of her symptoms and returned for the consideration of the consulting physician. It was found that she had suffered for years from deafness in both ears, and there were most distressing noises in the head. The discharge from the ears was also very troublesome. As an additional complication, there was great irritation of the throat. The appropriate Drouet Treatment was begun at once, and faithfully carried out at home by Miss Gregson, under the supervision of the consulting physician by correspondence.

On June 15th the change for the better was very marked, and from that time the hearing improved so rapidly that early in July the following communication was received:

3 Radcliffe Street, Preston, July 8th, 1901.

I received your letter, and I am happy to inform you that my hearing is all right now. If I keep as I am now I shall be perfectly satisfied, as the discharges and noises have ceased entirely. Thanking you for your kind attention, and the interest you have taken in my ailment, I am, yours faithfully,

M. GREGSON.

About a fortnight later Miss Gregson wrote again:

3 Radcliffe Street, Preston, July 17th.

I am only too pleased you should include my name among the reports of cures of deafness, for I am sure I am perfectly satisfied and happy to say that after so short a time I am entirely cured of my deafness and ear trouble. I want to add that I have not had so clear a throat as I have now for a long time. Before I began the Drouet Treatment the least bit of cold I got affected my throat. Thanking you again for your kind attention, I am, yours faithfully,

MARY GREGSON.

The original letter, with all the others of which extracts have been given above, may be seen in the Autograph Room of the Drouet Institute, where hundreds of letters emanating from grateful patients are kept. The Autograph Room is open to the public every day, except Sunday, from ten a.m. to six p.m.

To prevent misunderstanding, it should be stated that the Drouet Institute does not profess to cure all cases submitted. It is unfortunately too true that in some cases the complaint is incurable, generally owing to anatomical changes that have taken place in the structure of the organs of hearing. But we must add the Drouet Institute never prescribes treatment in cases deemed incurable. Those who suffer from any affection of the hearing, or ailment of the throat or nose, need therefore have no hesitation in submitting their cases to the Institute. Whatever the serious nature of the case may be, or of whatever long-standing, and, though previous treatment has been unsuccessful, all hope is not lost, for the Drouet system of treatment is essentially different from all others, and in cases where other systems have failed, it has almost always been successful, thus repeatedly effecting the seeming miracle of radically curing patients who had been on several occasions pronounced hopelessly incurable.

Let us state again that the *Journal for the Deaf* is forwarded free of charge to all who apply for it to the SECRETARY of the DROUET INSTITUTE, 72 Regent's Park Road, N.W. Let us add that free consultations are given by correspondence, by means of a special report form, to those unable to leave home. The Consultation Room is open every day, except Sunday, from two till four. A charge is made for personal consultations given at the Institute. Special personal consultations may also be had at any time by previous arrangement.

THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

MORE and more thrilling grow the "Adventures of an Actress." In this number we find beautiful Hazel Harlow in Newcastle. Next week we shall have a vivid story of her sojourn in Rugby. Residents in these towns could do me a great service if they chose. With the scene of these stories laid in their own neighbourhoods, they have only to mention the fact to their neighbours to ensure their immediate interest. Will Newcastle-ites and Rugby-ans kindly help me in this matter?



DON'T despair, "Leonard." Remember you are young yet—only thirty, and if you haven't done anything to distinguish yourself, there is heaps of time. By way of cheering you, my most erudite assistant has compiled the following:

Sir Walter Scott was thirty-four when he made his first draft of "Waverley," and was forty-four when he re-wrote and published it.

Nearly every one of those tales which conferred immortality upon him was composed after he had reached the age of forty-six.

Carlyle was forty-two when he published the "French Revolution," the first work to which he formally put his name. His "Cromwell" was published when he was fifty.

Swift was fifty-nine when he published "Gulliver's Travels."

Tennyson was fifty when his idylls, "Elaine," "Vivien," and "Guinevere" were published, and was about sixty-two when he completed the series with "Gareth and Lynette."

Macaulay was forty-eight when he issued the first and second volumes of his "History of England," and the third and fourth did not appear until he was fifty-five. Good as are the essays of his early manhood, they pale when compared with the work of his maturer years.

John Stuart Mill was fifty-three when his essay of "Liberty" was published, and fifty-six when he gave us that on "Utilitarianism."

Milton was certainly more than fifty-four when he began to compose his "Paradise Lost"; he was fifty-nine when he sold it to Simmons, the bookseller.

George Eliot composed "Middlemarch" between the ages of forty-six and fifty-one, and, after that, "Daniel Deronda."

Bacon was fifty-nine before he published his great work, "The Novum Organum."

Cowper was over fifty when he published "John Gilpin" and "The Task."

Defoe was fifty-eight when he published "Robinson Crusoe."

Darwin published his "Origin of Species" when fifty, and his "Descent of Man" when sixty-two.

Grote wrote the larger part of the "History of Greece" between the ages of fifty-two and sixty-two, and Hallam occupied nearly the same period of life with his "Introduction to the Literature of Europe."

The two works by which Thomas Hood has survived the grave, "The Bridge of Sighs" and "The Song of the Shirt," were composed when he was forty-six, and from a sick bed, from which he never rose.

Longfellow gave us "Hiawatha" when forty-eight, "Tales of a Wayside Inn" when fifty-eight.

"The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" was published when Holmes was forty-eight, and "Songs in Many Keys" when he was fifty-five.



A SERIES of articles, entitled, "The Schools of My Childhood," has just commenced in *M. A. P.*, and will be continued for some weeks. These articles, in addition to good pictures of the Irish Schools of the "Fifties" and the "Sixties," will contain several chapters of the biography of Mr. T. P. O'Connor.



ADVICE ON LOVE AND OTHER MATTERS.

(Replies to Correspondents.)

I AM afraid, "Strawberry," that you are distressing yourself too much because your face becomes red after washing. I am sure it is nothing to be ashamed of, and a face with plenty of colour certainly looks a great deal nicer than one without any colour at all. I think, however, you might lessen the colour a little by washing in lukewarm water and wiping your face quite dry with a very soft towel. This redness is very often caused by indigestion, so you should be very careful to eat your meals slowly.

WELL, "Flora," the young man you have kept company with for many years has been very cool in his behaviour to you for the last eight months, and as he is the only man you have ever loved, you want to know what you can do. What a

pity to let a coolness arise that has lasted so long! The best thing for you to do is to ask him frankly if there is anything to account for his coolness, and if so, will he tell you what it is. Very likely you have only imagined it, and he loves you as much as ever he did.

"CUPID" has fallen in love with a girl who is very shy. She has no friends, and does not know that he loves her; and he wants to know how he can begin to woo her. Under the circumstances, "Cupid," I see no reason why you should not write and tell her how matters stand. You can judge by the way she receives your letter what her feelings towards you are.



TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I AM open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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BILE BEANS have been found an undoubted cure for Headache, Biliousness, Costiveness, Piles, Liver Trouble, Bad Breath, Rheumatism, Indigestion, Dizziness, Anæmia, Buzzing in the Head, Fulness after Eating, Lack of Ambition, Debility, Influenza, Female Ailments, Pimples, and a host of other ailments that owe their origin to defective bile flow, assimilation, and digestion. They will also be of great service in Nervous Disorders, Loss of Appetite, Shortness of Breath, Blotches on the Skin, Insomnia, and Troubled Sleep. They act quickly in restoring females to health, and for a general aperient and tonic remedy they are unequalled. These Beans are placed on the market in a form that anyone can take them without medical supervision; and, as the price is so very low, there are few homes that cannot afford to always have a box on the shelf for emergency.

Depôts and Laboratories have been opened in England, and if you are unwell and a sufferer, and have doubts whether it is digestion or not, the manufacturers invite you to write in to their London Office, giving a full description of ailment, and free of charge you will be honestly answered whether BILE BEANS will cure in your case or not. Address: The BILE BEAN MANUFACTURING Co., 119 London Wall, London, and mark your letter *Special*. You can also send to London if your dealer does not stock BILE BEANS, and a box will be sent post paid and packed free on receipt of price 1/1½, and 2/9 for large box. Please mention this paper when writing.

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